

**National Marriage Webcast**  
**26<sup>th</sup> June 2012**  
**Sponsored by the Australian Christian Lobby**

Karl Faase: Good evening and I'm Karl Faase and welcome to the Marriage Webcast brought to you by the Australian Christian Lobby.

Tonight we look at marriage and specifically - do Christian values and ideals for marriage still matter? Should marriage remain between a man and a woman in today's world? Can Christians continue to advocate for the biological meaning of marriage publicly?

This webcast is shown across Australia tonight to around 500 venues, from Broome to Bunbury in WA, to Emerald in Queensland, down to Launceston in Tasmania – we hear they're frozen – but it's good to have you with us. It represents all denominations and tonight we have an outstanding panel to help discuss the issues that are really important.

Unfortunately, Christopher Pearson has to apologise for tonight. He's unwell and his doctor has said he can't travel. But we do have with us John Anderson, former Deputy Prime Minister and former leader of the National Party of Australia; Professor Patrick Parkinson AM who is a Professor of Law at the University of Sydney; Patricia Weerakoon who is a Medical Doctor, sexologist and writer; Allan Meyer is a pastor, and along with his wife Helen, who's also on the panel, are the founders of CareForce Life Keys. Helen Meyer has a tertiary education in Human Relations and Masters in Education, and a Masters in Counselling. Will you please welcome the panel?

Tonight is live at 7.30 from Eastern Standard Time and we encourage you to join the conversation by commenting on Twitter. Make sure you add the hash key, the hash tag 'marriage' before you tweet. So to our first question, which is really a broad one, "Why does marriage matter?" Why defend the institution of marriage and why is marriage important? I want to go first to Allan as a pastor. From your perspective, why is marriage important?

Allan Meyer: Well, it's important in just so many ways.

Firstly, it's foundational. David Blankenhorn in his book *The Future of Marriage* said this, he said '*The evidence that marriage is defined here, (ie, between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others for life), the evidence for marriage as defined here, is a universal human institution, is overwhelming. In fact, especially in the light of the vastness of the human historical record and the variety of human sexual experience, the power and the prevalence of this one sexual institution across time and across cultures is so noteworthy and so empirically incontrovertible that I'm tempted to say all human societies*'.

Now it might be possible to point to one or two exceptions to that in history but, as a statement, it is defensible. The fact is that marriage is profoundly foundational to human societies and across cultures for all of human experience. The problem I think we face in the West, and one of the issues we have to address is the fact that the West is struggling with a big story, or a 'Meta' story for life - something on which to found its discussion on the big issues like marriage.

Richard Dawkins, when he was speaking at the University of Washington in 2009, was willing to say to that audience that he was aware that his perspective on life left him with four unsolved mysteries. Firstly, the origin of life - how would life ever have begun? For that, he said, there really at this moment is no answer; secondly, the origin of sex; thirdly the origin of consciousness, and then the origin of morality, and these are somewhat big issues when it comes to life (*Karl Faase – 'just a little'*) and when it comes to the issue of building a human society.

The Bible, however, has a meta-story and in the meta-story of the Bible, sex is foundational. Gender actually matters. The Bible records in that very simple description of creation, male and female as expressions of God's divine nature; that gender is designed, not accidental; it is not the end product of a mindless, mechanistic universe, and that the purpose of gender was marriage. Now, as a Christian, my issue is to be a follower of Christ.

What did Jesus say about this? What did Jesus think about gender? What did He think about marriage? I think it's important to recognise that Jesus drew His followers to the core issues at the heart of God and God's concern for people. For example, when He came to deal with the issue of '*You shall not kill*', Jesus went to the core and said it's a lot more than just killing, it's about anger and disruptive behaviour that fills people with fear and destroys families and marriages.

When it comes to adultery, it's more than just the act; it's about the purity of heart that allows a community to function well. What did Jesus think about marriage? Well, we aren't left to wonder about that because in Matthew chapter 19 Jesus was asked what did He think about the issue of divorce, and He responded in a way that gives us an insight into how Jesus viewed the foundational nature of marriage when He said this, "*Have not you read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female?*".

You may not embrace the creation as a meta-story, but Jesus did, and as a follower of Christ, therefore I embrace that meta-story, that gender is created and for this reason He said, *A man will leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh so they are no longer two, but they're one. Therefore, what God has joined together...*" Jesus viewed marriage as a God kind of joining.

He viewed it as foundational to the creation, and if you just go a few more verses later, He addresses the issue ‘Well, what you do, then, with sexual passions if marriage is problematic for you?’ And Jesus’ view on sex was that it was not simply a matter of personal self-indulgence; that everybody is called, in Jesus’ thinking, to see sex as being an issue that was created for the purpose of marriage and everybody else is called to a life of chastity, and I know that creates challenges for every one of us – for heterosexuals, for same-sex attraction - it presents challenges to everybody. But if you’re going to be a follower of Jesus Christ, you have to take gender seriously and you have to take marriage as foundational to human relationships.

Karl Faase: Fantastic. Carrying on from that, Professor Patrick Parkinson, give us a bit of a picture from a social cohesion point of view; from our society’s point of view. What difference does marriage make there?

07:14

Patrick Parkinson:

It’s best to think of marriage as the glue which holds the atoms of society together, which gives it solidity and strength.

Allan mentioned the legal definition of marriage, which is the union of a man and a woman for life, to the exclusion of all others. That union is fundamental; it’s a social union; it’s the companionship of a man and a woman. We are created to be social beings and marriage is at the heart of that. It’s at the heart of being an economic unit.

Families are efficient economic units, to share housing, resources, electricity and all these other things. It’s also a caring unit and obviously we think of families as caring for children. We should think of it as caring for the elderly as well – for mum’s parents, for dad’s parents. Families do all of that. They are foundational to the support structures of society - but why marriage?

Well, that definition, the union of a man and a woman for life, to the exclusion of all others, is critical to the whole thing, because it’s as we make that commitment, and as we maintain that commitment, if we can do, both man and woman, we have the security to take risks as a family. And women in particular, take all sorts of risks.

08.35

Have you thought of having children as a risk? It is. It’s a risk in a sense that you become more economically vulnerable, financially dependent, and the security and stability of that union, when both of you have committed to be together for life to the exclusion of all others – you’re not worried about other sexual attractions or partners because you’ve both committed to fidelity. That is foundational. And as we have lost our commitment to marriage as a society, we have seen a

whole realm of social problems which have emerged from that.  
marriage is the glue.

09.12

Karl Faase: John, can you follow on from that, from somebody who's been in Government in our nation, where do you see marriage there, in following on from what Prof Patrick Parkinson's just been saying?

09.20

John Anderson:

Well look, I think the point that I would make is that I'm a Christian and I believe for those reasons, as a Christian, that have been given to us, that marriage is a very important institution. I also accept that in a society that is pluralist, in which we divide State and Church, we cannot impose our will on others. We cannot do that. But we have both the absolute right to put forward our worldview, as does everyone else in our community, and to ask respectfully that it be respectfully heard, and at least considered.

And I think there are very powerful public policy reasons why we should be defending marriage, over and above the reasons that are derived from our beliefs.

Societies right down through the ages, if I could take a bird's-eye view of this, and extant across the globe today, still recognise the importance of the family as the basic unit in society and the proper environment in which to raise children. It is really only in the West - and this is a point that ought to be made in the context of those people who are saying that Australia's fallen behind other countries who are moving further down this road than us - a few isolated communities at particular point in time, which just happened, by the way, to be in the West, a culture which has lost its way, which has cut itself free from its moorings, and is very unsure about what it believes in any more - the same time as it is evidently in serious trouble, that wants to go down this road. And I would say that we need to very, very careful here.

10.57

We should defend this institution for good public policy reasons. Marriage is not a purely private affair. There are private aspects of it; but in reality, if you stop and think about it, it is enormously important in a public sense as well.

When marriages do not function, as Professor Parkinson has said, society pays an enormous price. When it does function well, society benefits economically and socially and in every other way. You stop and think about the enormous costs of family breakdown, of dysfunctional home environments now and the way that plays out in our communities.

So it's good that we have a debate about marriage; we haven't had one for a long time. We need to focus on its importance, on its benefits; but we need to be willing to define what it really is. I would go so far as to say to you that if the West cannot decide what marriage is, then the West really is in deep trouble.

11.57

Karl Faase: Thank you John. As you can see, this panel really struggles to speak, so we'll get through about three questions tonight! But our next question actually comes from our studio audience and it's from Gary Franks. Thanks Gary.

12.08

Gary Franks: Thanks Karl. There's obviously a number of perspectives in this argument of defining marriage – sociological, theological, psychological, emotional. As a medical practitioner, however, I'm interested in the biological perspective, and I'd like to ask particularly Patricia Weerakoon could she elaborate on some of those biological reasons why we should not, in fact, meddle with the definition of marriage as between a male as a husband and a wife. It's already been touched on a bit by Allan, but could you elaborate on that please?

Karl Faase: Thank you, Gary; Patricia Weerakoon?

12.48

Patricia Weerakoon:

Yes, I mean, the male and female bodies, just looking at a biological point of view are very similar in many ways; I mean, like we've all got hearts and lungs and stuff, but there's just one exquisite difference, and that is our genitalia and our reproductive system. And you see there is such a created goodness. I mean, I'm a sexologist, which means that for the last twenty years I have just basically been studying and talking and everything 24/7 about sex. So, you know, the point is that when you look at the male and the female genitalia, it's just such a beautiful, anatomical fit.

We're just made to fit as male and female. And not just that, the plumbing, the hard-wiring of our brain is just made for perfect male / female fit. As sex scientists, we talk about what we call the sexual response, but that's just a big term for what happens when you get together and make love. But the point is that even there, there is a complementarity between the male sexual response and the female, so that there is a fit. So when God said, 'Go, procreate and fill the world', He also made it wonderful fun when you were doing it as a man and a woman.

14.00

Karl Faase: Which is a great encouragement for all of us. Helen, from a family psychological point of view, how do you see that complementarity we've just been chatting about?

14.11

Helen Meyer: Well, the most important thing for a family, obviously, is stability and as an educator and as a counsellor dealing with kids who are in unstable environments and watching the issues of them struggle for their cognitive development, their emotional development and their social development; working with them and seeing the behavioural problems we have in schools, knowing that unless a kid has a stable environment where the mum and dad love each other and it's a safe place for them, then the outcomes for the kid can be quite negative and the aggressive behaviour we're seeing in classes – and we hear so much about it now – in terms of teachers trying to struggle with what's going on in schools. So, from my perspective, the stability is really, really important.

Karl Faase: Outstanding. Thank you.

15.01 There's much discussion in our community that those advocating for same-sex marriage want what heterosexual couples are looking for – a settled marriage in a stable environment. However, not everyone in the gay community aspires to that. Gay activist Dennis Altman was speaking on a gay writer's panel in May in Sydney this year. On the panel they discussed the question of same-sex marriage and specifically the attitude of many gay males couples to monogamy. Now in that question, this is what Altman had to say on that panel:

*'Now, I'm going to speak as a gay man, and one of the things about gay male culture is that it is not a monogamous culture, and all the evidence we have suggests that monogamy is a myth, that there are virtually no – there are many long-standing gay relationships – there are virtually no long-standing monogamous gay relationships.'*

16.04

Karl Faase: I mean, that's a pretty remarkable statement for someone who's advocating for same-sex marriage. Helen, why is monogamy important to the family? Even though that sounds like such an odd question to ask, but why is it important?

16.20

Helen Meyer: It isn't really odd because I think monogamy is really important in terms of investing in each other's live and you don't have a great marriage; you don't have a great family environment without investing in each other's lives.

That takes time, it takes energy; it takes working through the issues and the struggles that come up in a family because as we all know – we've got four kids, three sons and a daughter – what it's like to have to work with a family. So investing in that; and then the level of intimacy that comes through a monogamous relationship is something you can't possibly get when you go from partner to partner. It's just not possible. Because of our wiring – we're actually wired to 'stick' to

a person and then if you unstick and go to the next partner, then the investment and the trust issues become lesser and then it becomes an issue in which you can no longer invest in an ongoing relationship because you become so damaged by it – by multiple partners.

17.17

Karl Faase: Thank you Helen. Patricia Weerakoon, what's your response to that?

Patricia Weerakoon:

I was just going to comment on that, when she said 'stuck' because, I mean, as a sexologist, when I bring my twin passions of God and sex together, it just fascinates me how science is now just pointing to the truths of the Bible and this is one of those because today we know with brain science and the way we can study that when you look at a man and a woman coming together in sexual intercourse, there is a 'brain bonding' that happens. And there's a hormone we call Oxytocin, which we scientists call 'the cuddle hormone' and the more sex you have as man and woman, the higher you bond, because every time you have an orgasm your Oxytocin goes through the roof, and so we call that the 'virtuous cycle'. So you have more sex and you bond even more.

18.04

And then there's another hormone called Vasopressin which is actually called the 'monogamy hormone' because there are prairie wolves which when they have Vasopressin then they bond to each other. And Vasopressin levels go up when a man and a woman have sex. So God sort of says, 'do it', and then He says, 'Oh, by the way, I give you the brain mechanism to make it really easy'.

Karl Faase: Fantastic.

18.30

John Anderson:

As a non-academic, a wise old man said to me and my wife one day before we got married, *'If you want to know how to raise your children, everybody's gonna give you advice and there are endless books out there. But the key thing I can tell you is that what your children need to know is that Mum and Dad love each other'*. And then they'll have a secure enough environment in which they can grow emotionally. And the thing that we noticed from a very early age, an astonishingly early age with our four children, was that they tended to look for different things from mum and from dad, and both, I would suggest, are very important: nurture and warmth from mum and play and stimulation from me. And coming from, as I'm very fortunate to be able to say, in my own case, a family where it's been quite close and tight, particularly on my wife's side, the interesting thing was that my mother-in-law and those sort of generation said this, "We noticed that all the time in our own children".

19.28

Karl Faase: So John, that's good - there's plenty of cuddle hormone going on there.

John Anderson: Dangerous place to be – this.

Karl Faase: Patrick, reminding what we've said, the statement was made that there are virtually no monogamous relationships, and they're asking for the same sort of relationship that heterosexual couples have in marriage. From the children's point of view, just following on from what John said, where do you see that as being important, a monogamous relationship?

16.53

Patrick Parkinson:

I think it's a really critical issue in this debate. Do gay male couples really want marriage in the sense that we mean it - as the union for life to the exclusion of all others? It's that critical element of marriage which gives the children the stability to grow, as John Anderson has explained. So that's where I see the connection. It's a real risk that we will lose everything about marriage. We've already lost, 'it's for life', we've already lost that 'it's to the exclusion of all others', to some extent. But if we're to lose the man and woman bit too, what is there left of what marriage means culturally for us?

20.38

Karl Faase: Yes, thank you. We've been taking questions over email for the past month, and this one is from David Abeline in Victoria and he says, (and many would have experienced this),

*"When discussing same-sex marriage, I am often called homophobic because I don't consider the feelings of the individuals who are homosexual. How can we include the suffering individual in our message, and what is best for our nations? Christians are being constantly referred to as homophobic, or bigots, due to their position."*

Helen Meyer, tough question, but is that the case? Now I'm kind of like asking you, 'Do you believe you're homophobic?' And obviously the answer is no, but how do you answer that question? What's your response?

21.15

Helen Meyer: Well, first of all, I don't think I am homophobic. I grew up - my closest friend from primary school was homosexual and so I had a very 'first-hand' experience of that, but in terms of our ministry, in terms of the things we do, we take people where they are. And I would hope that we'd have enough compassion to be able to have this debate without using hateful language, without hurting one another, without being vitriolic or hostile or aggressive.

So, to me, if I'm homophobic, I think there would be hostility, there would be a denial of their human dignity and all those kinds of things, which I don't believe is the case.

In our ministry we had couples who came to our church who were same-sex couples. And they felt it was a safe enough environment because of the things we did in trying to encourage families, in helping children, in dealing with those who've been sexually abused - in and out of the church - and also working with people in our community. They felt safe enough to actually be in our environment. So I think that speaks volumes about it, at least from where I stand.

22.29

Karl Faase: Now I want to come back to Allan on that, in your experience. But John, some reflections from people internationally about this picture of whether Christians are homophobic.

22.37

John Anderson:

You know, look, it's an important question. It's regrettable that the word is, I think, used in some quarters in an attempt to sort of intimidate and put people off.

Now there are times where I'm sure people have been homophobic, both Christians and non-Christians, and it's a good thing that as a society we've moved beyond that. It's particularly important that Christians not display that characteristic. And sometimes, you know, progressives who are pushing some of these lines, I think, do go a bit overboard and sort of forget that Christians, when they are being true to their beliefs, are people who love, regardless of what activities another person might be engaged in.

And I was reminded the other day of a very interesting article - you can Google it if you like, in the opinion pages of *The Guardian* newspaper. Roy Hattersley is a man who has no truck with Christianity; a very bright writer who was a Labor cabinet minister; a very well-known public figure in Great Britain.

He wrote an article recently called *'Faith Does Breed Charity'* and amongst other things he said, *'You know, I'm one of those people who rejects the Christian idea that there's a God who doesn't like homosexual behaviour. But while I and my friends sit around the dinner table',* well I'm paraphrasing, but this is what he said, *'scoffing at people who do have those beliefs, I have to concede that, more than likely, it's the Christians that you'll find out there helping people in need, including homosexuals who are facing a crisis, or need medical attention, or need whatever'.*

24.12

Now that is the right model and it's very honest of him to concede that point. And it raises something else that I think I would say. I'm very

concerned that in our culture now we're losing civility. Now I have beliefs that I, you know, am expressing here tonight, that I will no doubt be taken to task over, but I would say I think it's important that I be allowed to put those in a calm and rational and, I hope, considered way, and not in a homophobic way at all. And I don't want to be homophobic. That is not my objective and I hope I'm not; I don't believe I am.

24.50 But it would be very useful if we were to take some of the shrillness out of this debate, to recognise that what is being advocated here by those who want change is the overturning of centuries of established wisdom, and I use those words very carefully, by this and many other cultures, and they need to make the case so that those who will ultimately make the decision, and I believe that's the Australian people in the end through their Parliament, make their decision on an informed basis. Not one where they're responding to intimidation or inadequate or poorly-presented advice. I think that is really important.

We need to calm this thing down and behave like grown-up and civilised people. I really do think that it's incumbent upon Australian citizens to do that. That's what Australians everywhere I meet in the streets these days say they expect from their parliamentarians; can't imagine why they're saying that at the moment, but they are. And it's incumbent on us all, I think, to then not be hypocrites in it.

Karl Faase: Absolutely.

John Anderson:

We need to raise the tone, I believe, and the civility and the information-base, and the fact-seeking basis of this whole debate.

26.02

Karl Faase: Thank you, John.

Allan, Helen kind of hinted the fact that you're actually dealing, in the ministry that you do, with people that struggle with this on an ongoing basis. Do they see you as phobic? Do you have a view that's contrary to their lifestyle?

26.17

Allan Meyer: Well the issue of homophobia is one that doesn't even enter into my thinking. I have a view on sex. I think sex is holy. I have a view on sex that it was designed for marriage.

Now everybody struggles with sex. Heterosexuals struggle with it, same-sex attracted people struggle with it; everybody struggles with sex. The issue is; how are we supposed to handle this? And I have a view that as a follower of Christ, what I'm intending to do is to seek to honour His claim on my life.

26.52 Now I'm in the fortunate situation that I have an appropriate place for the expression of that in the marriage I have and I'm grateful for that. I'm grateful for the fact that I grew up in a home where my father loved my mother. It had a huge impact on my life and one of the reasons I'm still married is because I had such a profoundly encouraging example. But I've felt the pressure of my own sexuality. I mean, I've felt the unfortunate and unhelpful attraction to women that aren't my wife. And the reason that we're still married after forty-four years, and still love one another, is not because I haven't felt the pressure of my own sexuality, but because I've simply made a decision about how that's going to be handled.

27.36 I'm going to handle it in such a way... I said to this girl when she was nineteen years of age, *'Forsaking all others, and cleaving only unto you, in sickness and in health, for better for worse, till death us do part'*, and that's required some significant self-control, and some significant denial of my personal passions in order to fulfil that. One of the things I'm grateful for is that she still loves me.

28.00 I heard this great statement that married men live longer. I said that at a marriage once, and a guy yelled out from the back, *'No, mate, it only feels longer'*. The reality is that marriage has been so good for my health but I tell you what, it has required some significant discipline. So when I see someone else struggling with his sexuality, who's going to throw a stone? I mean, it's an issue that virtually everybody will face in their life, the appropriate management of their sexual passions. And if whatever area that gives you a problem in, my job is not to throw a stone at you, but to help you to manage it well.

28.41  
Karl Faase. Thank you, Allan. Listen, we've got a question from Jess Shirley in the audience, and it's actually, I would like, Allan, for you to start the answer on this.

28.51  
Jess Shirley: Thank you. Hi Allan. I have a question regarding the church's teachings on homosexual relationships. Firstly, what is the church's teaching on homosexual relationships and then also, do we believe that homosexuals automatically go to hell?

29.07  
Allan Meyer. Wow, well thanks for that one.

As a follower of Jesus, my question is, *'What did Jesus think about that?'* Some would say Jesus never had anything to say about that - I don't agree that that's true. I think in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made a very important statement. He said, *'I did not come to abolish the Law, I came to fulfil it'*. In other words, *'I am not discounting the wisdom of the Old Testament, but it is going to need to be rethought in the light of the amazing grace of God'*. And then what Jesus did, was

he went back to the core of God's heart that was in the Law, and explained what that was intended to do for the living of a life that was both God-honouring and wonderful as far as people are concerned.

- 30.02 I have to say I do not believe the New Testament contemplates homosexual marriage. I don't think you can find it there. And so I would take the view that the New Testament approach to marriage is that sex and gender were created for the purpose of marriage; that's where sex has its appropriate expression, and others are called to the challenging life of chastity. Now, what about heaven and hell?
- 30.32 I don't laugh off the issue of heaven and hell, because, you see, at the end of the day, I don't think I'm going to stand in the court of public opinion. I think one day I'm going to stand in the presence of God. That's my view of life. I think there will be a day when I will render an account to my Creator for the life that I have lived. Now, I thank God that the issue of heaven and hell is not based on the level of my performance in this life. I thank God that there's a Psalm that says this, *'Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven; whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man (or the woman) whose sin the Lord will never count against him'*. Heaven or hell is based on what Jesus did on the cross, not how well I have developed in managing the challenging issues of life.
- 31.28 So the question of heaven and hell, then, becomes this, *'Am I a Christ-follower?'* Jesus was very politically incorrect. He said, *'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No-one comes to the Father but by Me'*. So I'm following Him. And the core blessing of the New Testament is that it is possible for sinful people to be viewed in the eyes of God as not only totally forgiven, but as righteous as Jesus.
- 31.55 Every one of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and we continue to do things that are unhelpful and dishonouring both to God and people every day of our lives. Heaven and hell is not based on the level of my perfection, but it is based on the level in which I'm travelling.
- 32.12 Now a person can be struggling with all kinds of things. It may be anger, it may be alcohol, it may be drugs, it may be making a marriage work; it may be same-sex attractions. There are a thousand ways in which people can be pressured in unhelpful ways to do things that do not honour God or conform with God's call upon their life. Salvation is not based on how far down the track I've come; it's based on who I'm following. And I thank God that you can be struggling with all kinds of things, and if Jesus Christ is the One in whom you put your trust, then heaven is your home.
- 32.50 Now, you do need to recognise that you need to be following Him; you can't be going in the other direction. And so my simple statement to people is this, no matter what you're struggling with; no matter what

the challenges are that you face, there is a Saviour and His name is Jesus. Just follow Him and see where it leads'.

33.08

Karl Faase: That's fantastic Allan.

Another question from the audience, this time from Patrick Lengrell. Patrick, a question to John Anderson, is that right Patrick?

33.17

Patrick Langrell:

Sure, that's right. Thank you for taking my question.

On this issue about gay marriage, two key, sort of, concepts are constantly proclaimed at all levels of society. The first is that the majority of Australians are in support of same-sex marriage, and this is further reinforced by the idea that all of the popular people, all the cool people, all the celebrities, the actors, the models, are all in favour of it. Who can be against it?

The second thing that is often waved around like a magic wand, that sort of silences debate, is the claim that it's inevitable; it's going to happen, you know, move out of the way, don't be caught on the wrong side of history. Now these two things often sap the energy of defenders of real marriage. But is it really the case, about these two things? Is it really the case that the majority of Australians support? And is it really inevitable?

34.02

John Anderson:

I'll roll the two together. Thank you for the question.

I think, if I may, roll the two together by saying that no, I do not believe it's inevitable. I actually think that it's very useful that we're having this debate about marriage, and the longer it runs and the more thorough it is, I think you'll find the more Australian people, who are not really the 'cool set', or the celebrities, or the, dare I say it, the media, who seem universally of one view on this, but they're a very pragmatic and thoughtful people, and I've had years in public life. Intuitively and collectively, with the right information, they make the right call.

34.42

I preface my remarks by saying that, because, I don't think we've had a wide-ranging debate. We haven't had to stop to think about what marriage is and what it means to our society for a very long time. We haven't had to, have we? Now, that's been unfortunate in many ways because we've let it slip, let our understanding slip, in many ways we've trashed it.

- 35.06 I mean, one of the great ironies about our shifting attitudes towards marriage is that when I was a university student thirty years ago - it was only thirty years ago - the 'progressives' as they like to be called now, were against marriage. It was entrapment, it was ensnarement, it was enslavement, it was enforced prostitution. Now the same people have decided, many of them, that it's so wonderful everyone must have access to it. There's a great inconsistency in that if you stop and think about it.
- 35.36 If we really focus on this, if, and that's what tonight's about, an honest, fair-dinkum debate and examination of this issue, we will start to realise that there are very profound public institutions- implications that are likely to flow from us continually redefining marriage, because in the end, this is what this debate is really going to be about, if it continues in its current vein - redefining marriage. It must be. It's to move marriage away from the age-old understanding of what it is.
- 36.10 Two of those consequences, I suspect, when people focus on them will be of deep concern. They are to me, and I'd like to share them with you. One is that when we hear this talk about same-sex marriage being a human right, when you stop and think about it, there are two sets of human rights involved. Same-sex marriage means same-sex parenting, which means that although not all marriages produce children, all children have two biological parents.
- 36.40 For society to actually condone and to put into law a construct by which children will be brought into the world and not only denied access to their biological parents - ordained by the State. We know sometimes tragically that happens, but for the State to say that is legitimate and you can have a biological parent's name struck off the Birth Register, raises very troubling human rights issues in its own right, if I can put it that way. And I think Australians are beginning to be aware of that.
- 37.17 The second thing that will flow, and this for me is a very serious one. I think the fundamental freedom we enjoy in the West is freedom of belief and the other side of the coin, freedom of speech. If the State enacts legislation that says that same-sex marriage is exactly the same, if you like, as heterosexual marriage, it will then have to defend its position, which will mean that the right I exercised, and my wife exercised as our children were growing up to put to them the construct that we thought was right for them to handle their sex lives and their sexual urges, I would not be allowed to do that anymore. The State would say, *'No. You cannot put your views'*; the views that I happen to believe in.
- 38.09 That is a denial of my right to free speech and to free belief, the core value that we have in a free society. That's a very serious issue indeed. And I think these things are only just beginning to dawn on the Australian people.

38.25 So I sum up by saying that's why I actually think the polls are suggesting quite strongly that when they're done with integrity, and some of these polls have not been done with integrity, but the ones that have been; are suggesting, in fact, that not only is this seen as a lower issue order as time goes on, support for it is drying up. Not drying up, that's perhaps too extreme, but slipping. I really do believe that. So, is it inevitable? No, it is not, but I think it would be a very good thing if everyone involved in this were to in a civil, polite, informed way, get themselves 'up to speed' and have their say in this public debate.

39.05

Karl Faase: Prof Patrick Parkinson, your follow up from what John's saying?

39.09

Patrick Parkinson:

I think deep down the Australian people know that we have stuffed up when it comes to family life. You know, we've spent thirty or forty years walking away from what marriage means. We've spent all this time changing our laws. There's now almost no difference between being married and living in a de facto relationship.

39.25

Thirty-five percent of all babies born in Australia are born outside of marriage, and it's rising every year. Twelve percent of all babies born in Australia are born without Mum and Dad living in the same house. I think we are reaping the whirlwind of this and we know it. Deep down we know it and what we can do as Christians, what we can do tonight, is to say it and say it out aloud and that's where the same-sex marriage debate matters because we have to say, we have to recommit as a society to what marriage means, what family means, and honour that again.

40.00

As heterosexual people, we have walked away from that. I think the Australian people deep down know that we have made a real mess, and this might be a watershed, this might be a time when we begin to turn back the tide.

40.15

Karl Faase: Let me just stay with you Patrick. We had another email question from Jenny Missendon from Queensland and Jenny writes, *'Is the refusal to recognise same-sex unions as marriage discriminatory as is claimed?'* Now both you and John are kind of hinting at that. What is your view about the whole idea of that this is discriminatory, or this is unjust or this is unfair? How do you respond to that?

40.37

Prof Patrick Parkinson:

I should explain - I'm a Family Lawyer. I've spent a lot of time in public policy, working on family issues, and throughout that time, I've supported same-sex equality on a whole range of issues. Various rights

in which - heterosexual couples have certain rights, and same-sex couples should have the same sort of rights. And I think that is the way we should go, but marriage has always meant, in every culture, every society throughout history, the union of a man and a woman. And so, what I say is, look, it's a bit like there's a rose and there's a carnation. You're not saying that a rose and a carnation are the same thing, they're just different things and marriage and a same-sex relationship are different things. I'm not saying one is better than the other, one is worse than the other, I'm not wanting to discriminate against the other, but what I'm saying is the same-sex relationship is not a marriage and should never be recognised as such. And that's just giving the right label to different forms of relationships. Not discrimination, just description.

41.43

Karl Faase: Just staying with you Patrick; in this whole issue about being unjust particularly, lots of laws have been changed in Australia to make sure that, from a justice point of view, that relationship is honoured in law. Isn't that right?

41.56

Patrick Parkinson:

That's right, yes. There's now pretty much no area of life, in either State or Federal laws, where a same-sex couple have fewer rights than a heterosexual couple, well pretty much none and marriage itself has been watered down, so there's almost no difference between a marriage and a de facto relationship. So this is not about equality - not in Australia. Equality is already there. This is about definition and description and the preservation of our history and culture.

42.27

Karl Faase: Yes. Patricia, Give us some thoughts from your perspective on this question of discrimination. Do you see it - agreeing with what Patrick's saying? Is that how you see this?

42.39

Patricia Weerakoon:

I totally agree with what Patrick says. For one thing is that I - most of my friends are homosexuals and atheists, because I work in the field of sexology, and the point is that when you look at marriage, and then you think, ok, if we, sort of, just start stretching the limits and we say, 'Well ok if it's same-sex marriage', well, as a Sexologist, I have to look at the plethora of sexual practice and think, then what?

43.08

For instance, I belong to a group called '*International Academy of Sex Research*'. We meet once a year and talk about, well ... sex. And every year there's these symposiums, which are like cutting-edge topics, and this year, one of the topics is polyamory. Polyamory is where a group of people, male and female of varying number, get together and live as if in a de facto relationship - so polygamy, but polyamory. And then there's another area that we're studying and that is called '*Genetic*

*Sexual Attraction'*. That is sibling attraction, where two brother or sister or father and daughter are separated when the child is born or when they are very young, and they meet later and they fall in love. So when you think, you sort of stretch marriage beyond male / female adults, then where's it going to end?

44.06

Karl Faase: Let me go back to a question we asked before that we were talking to Helen and Allan about how do you therefore relate to all of these people that you're dealing with on an ongoing basis with a Christian worldview? Do they think you're homophobic?

44.20

Patricia Weerakoon:

Oh, no. Because the point is that they realise that, as a Christian, I know that my identity isn't in my heterosexuality. I'm very clear that my identity is in the fact that my identity is in Christ and just founded on who I am in Christ and the cross. And so, I will tell my homosexual friends, '*Look, I adore you*', and they know, I mean, I trust some of them more than I trust some of my Christian friends, and they know that. But the point is I would call them to be with me in that identity, because that's.... I must say that some of our churches, we've fallen short there because we've got to be so sure of our identity in Christ, and then we can call homosexuals to come join us in that identity. Because part of, I think, looking for marriage, is looking for some sort of identity, and if we don't provide the identity in the churches then people will go elsewhere and that, to a homosexual, is to the homosexual lifestyle and identity.

45.30

Karl Faase: Fantastic. Just going on to another area - many studies have been looking at the impact of same-sex marriage on couples, and on kids. How does the stability of home and marriage impact the future of kids? Helen, what's your thoughts on that?

45.42

Helen Meyer: Well stability's the number one foundation block as I said before, and where children struggle with the issue of people coming and going in their lives, especially carers or a parent who's there and then not there, they have huge abandonment issues in their lives. And it creates a problem for the kids in terms of grief and loss issues.

46.05

It creates a world of anxiety for the child, and then of course, as I said before that affects their learning ability; it affects their ongoing relationships, and it affects their future as adults, which we've had to deal a lot with, and why we developed some of our programs, to help adults who came through that kind of environment to somehow live a life where they can feel safe, where they can feel secure and where they can gain their own identity. Because the identity issues are another thing that come out of a family where there's instability, where

there's parents coming and going, or perhaps lovers, or it's not monogamous, and they get attached to that particular person, and they disappear out of their lives. It has a huge impact on the child.

46.50

Karl Faase: Yes, Patricia?

46.53

Patricia Weerakoon:

I also do sex education, and I talk to teens and do group work with teens, and one of the things we find is that today, the age at which teenagers and young people are having sex is dropping. And you talk to young people and you find that a lot of young people don't have that role model of a male and a female in an integrative, loving relationship, which is 'other-focused', which is looking rather to, '*what can I do for you?*' rather than, '*How can I get my desires met?*' And they're not seeing that role-model of marriage, with the marriages breaking down. And that is so sad. I mean, every time I meet them, it's just so sad that we are not providing them that marriage role model of love of man and woman and that giving and sharing that is so beyond sex - but sex is so much a part of.

47.50

Karl Faase: Patrick, I know there's been lots of studies, and there's a lot of kind of heat around this, isn't there? As to, is a child better or worse off if they're in a same-sex couple, and I know that there's been some research just released in America, but just seems to produce so much angst, doesn't it?

48.05

Patrick Parkinson:

Oh, this is a hugely controversial and difficult area. One of the problems is that the samples are just so small. If you go and do research and try to find kids raised in a lesbian family or a gay male family, they're really hard to find. The other question is, well who are you comparing them with? Are you comparing them with single mums, with step-families, with the various other combinations of family life that we have?

48.30

Now there has been a new study which is one of the most rigorous which has been done and one of the largest. And what it's showing is that on forty different characteristics, children grew up for some time with a same-sex couple, and twenty-five out of those forty, they were doing worse than kids who were raised by two parents, married parents, throughout their childhoods. They were doing about the same as kids raised mainly by a single mum or a step family.

49.03

Karl Faase: So this was twenty-five out of forty indicators demonstrated that they were doing worse? Now, I've actually seen some reactions to this

because there's some pretty vigorous reaction to any of these sorts of studies, isn't there?

Patrick Parkinson: Yes, yes.

49.17

Karl Faase: And it continues to build the debate for the family.

49.22

Patrick Parkinson:

I think, if I may come back to John Anderson and his children; we have known through the research and we have known for generations throughout every society that fathers and mothers give different things to kids. What John Anderson said about mums nurturing and fathers being more involved in adventure and play is just so well-understood by society.

49.46

Let's go back to those fundamentals, that when you have a male and a female raising children, when they are committed to each other, when they have a stable, secure home for the child from day one to the day that they leave home - which may be about thirty-five these days! It's not rocket science that those kids will do well. And the situation where some of those things aren't there - the stability isn't there or the role model isn't there, they are deficits. Kids are not going to do so well. We don't need a million more studies to tell us that.

50.23

Karl Faase: John?

50.25

John Anderson:

I just want to say, you know, in the end we can have, and we are having, very heated debates about what the research shows, but can I come back to something that I said earlier? And I urge all of you and listeners everywhere to confront the issue that I touched on a moment ago; if we are talking about children growing up in the context of a same-sex marriage, with two parents of the same sex, where the State, the Government, that is us, they have acted on our behalf to say that some children should be deliberately denied access to and even legal recognition of their biological mother or father.

51.12

I think that is a very profound human rights issue. I have to say that. I'm deeply troubled by it. And I don't think that's being addressed. It's over and above and beyond and even more important than the research about how children do, I think. It goes to the heart of whether we're going to commodify children and continue to value them according to who wants them or whether they're wanted or who doesn't want them; whether we're actually going to put some parents through the agony of bringing a child into the world and then being struck off the birth register, as we've seen happen in this state already.

51.51 Can I put it to you those are very profound questions and once the State, acting on your behalf, legislates for that sort of outcome, they will then have to back it, they will have to say, *'You cannot speak favourably of one form of relationship over another'*. That will, by definition, become something that the Government will have to start to take up. Your right to believe and to pass on your beliefs, to speak about them to your children, in fact I'd say your right and your responsibility, will be curtailed.

52.27  
Karl Faase: There'll be some that will say that that's scaremongering, but it's interesting that in some places overseas, that's actually been the outcome, hasn't it? Give us an example of that.

52.38  
John Anderson:  
Well, there are others who can give better examples of it, but this is a 'slippery-slope' argument, you see, isn't it? *'No, we won't insist that the Church must marry same-sex couples'*. Well we've just seen in Denmark laws now that say that churches must, if an individual pastor says he won't on a matter of conscience, his or her church must find someone who will. And then you've seen in America, some of these instances where parents have actually been told that they have no legal right to impose their view, a favourable view of heterosexual marriage, onto their children. That has actually happened in Massachusetts.

53.23  
Karl Faase: Patrick, you've got examples?

Patrick Parkinson:  
It is happening all over the Western World. In Britain people are losing their jobs because they have a conscience-based objection to same-sex marriage.

One man wrote on his private Facebook website, *'Look, the State can do whatever it wants. If it wants to legalise same-sex marriage, that's up to the State, but churches should not be forced to celebrate same-sex marriages'*. Hardly a radical statement; it represents the law in Britain at the present time.

53.50 That man was demoted from his job and threatened with dismissal, and this was a private communication on his website, on his Facebook site, supporting the current law in Britain. These are not isolated examples Karl, the issues I understand John is raising about freedom of belief and freedom of speech are very, very real.

54.16  
John Anderson:

And they are fundamental to the very freedoms that are now being used, I would say regrettably in some cases, abused, in the pursuit of change. The genesis is, in fact, in Christian faith; in the hard-fought-for right for people to believe and to speak their minds, as they chose. We should not give that up lightly.

54.40

Karl Faase: We're going to come back right towards the end about what we must do to make sure we don't give that up. Heterosexual marriages fail and can be childless, does this not blunt the argument against same-sex marriage; the idea that marriage is for having children, therefore there's heterosexual marriages that don't have children, doesn't that blunt the argument? John?

55.02

John Anderson: No, I rather think it strengthens it. All the evidence that we see of having weakened marriage producing disastrous outcomes for children, and therefore for society, this is the point about you can't privatise marriage. It's a public issue, this. Marriage is a public, as well as a private institution, because of the impact it has on our society and the costs we all pay, personally and financially and economically when families go wrong and troubled children are to put it in Kennedy's language, not able to ask what they can do for their country, but have to ask their country to support them; if you take what I mean by all of that.

55.41

It is actually a very powerful argument for saying we've taken marriage too lightly. We all know that marriage can be hard. We all know that tragically, sometimes it doesn't work. But we need to set the gold standard, don't we? We, all of us, fail in our diets. We know what we ought to eat, but we don't say, *'Well, we all ought to move on to junk food and just give up'*. And we need to avoid that temptation with something like marriage which is so important for us as individuals.

56.08

There's a sense in which my heart goes out to those who are looking for happiness in stable, long-term relationships. I think we're wired that way. I think we need it. I think it's about commitment. I think the paper, the piece of paper, is actually incredibly important. I hear people say, *'Aw, the piece of paper doesn't matter'*. Well the evidence suggests it does.

56.27

Making a public declaration that you matter so much to me that I will give you this piece of paper, in itself is, I think, a very significant thing. We need to again recognise that we are wired for deep, hard as it may be, long-term commitment in a marriage context, and reinforce and reinvigorate our commitment to it in our community, for our children's sake.

56.55 I make this observation; a very perceptive writer, Daniel Altman in the United States, a Harvard graduate, has written a very interesting article called *'The United States of Narcissism'*. And his argument is that the economic decline in the West has to do with the way that we have decided that the most important person in the world is me. And we have loaded ourselves up with debt, with cheap credit, all of these sorts of things; we've actually gutted ourselves economically in pursuit of our own ends.

57.26 Our very obsession with self is undermining our real happiness. But it's having a huge impact, and this is the point, on our society because unfortunately we're commodifying our children. We're saying our children are about our happiness and meeting our needs rather than recognising they have unbelievable and total intrinsic value. Every individual does, which is the answer to homophobia. We have no right to be homophobic. Before God every individual matters. Every individual counts. But most of all, our children, who have no voice, need to be recognised, not only that they count, but we need to speak for them.

Applause

58.16

Karl Faase: You shouldn't do that too much, you'll just encourage him and he'll be even longer next time. Helen, this whole idea, I think what I'm hearing John saying is that, and we've said this a couple of times, is marriage is important, and we've got to find ways to recommit to marriage. I mean, really, you and Allan in a lot of work you've been doing, that's what you try to do, isn't it?

58.38

Helen Meyer: Yes. Because, as we said, marriage takes work, and I think it's probably the greatest discipleship tool that God ever invented. I mean, who else is going to actually tell you the truth about yourself, or watch you when you're at your worst, losing your temper or whatever it happens to be....

Karl Faase: Not that that was Allan. No. Somebody else that you've heard of..

58.57

Helen Meyer: That's right. But marriage itself is actually a great tool for us to be able to grow as individuals and exactly what John's saying is - go beyond yourself to caring about the other person. But in the process of rubbing shoulders with that other person, doing life with them, it's actually developing you as a person. You're growing as a person; learning about unconditional love. But we do need the tools to do that. It's not automatic and that's part of what we've been on about in equipping churches.

59.28

Allan Meyer: I think John's right when he says that we haven't had this discussion in any depth for a really long time. I think there's quite a few things that we really haven't had much of a discussion about. One of them is the way in which sex has become idolatry. It's just all about my own personal fulfilment, and sex is more than that. For a generation to learn any differently, however, there's got to be something that the church calls discipleship. And I think back with some significant disappointment on spending twenty-seven years in a Bible-believing church, which was a great place to be, and not hearing a single thing ever, in any detail, on sex in twenty-seven years.

1.00.10 Now I started to come to think that people in our church didn't have sex, and I was prepared to move to another church and see.... it was just that we didn't want to say anything, and as a result, the very precious foundations that are found in the insight, the revelation that the Bible has on sex, on marriage, on parenting, on identity, the very issue of finding one's identity in something bigger than yourself and your own excitement in Christ Himself. This requires discipleship. And it's to this that we've devoted ourselves.

1.00.49 Our church grew in its significance and its impact in its community when we learned how to go beyond ourselves and begin to help our local community do marriage better; to parent better; to resolve the disruption of, perhaps, growing in a dysfunctional family background, and learning how not to perpetuate that for the next one. And my appeal to, because this is going to churches, is that the church has a tremendous responsibility to disciple people really well on sex. To not be silent on these issues; to really give great discipleship on marriage, on how to form and build really healthy families that do last a lifetime.

1.01.34 I'm one of the richest men in the world. I'm married to a beautiful woman; forty-four years. We met in high school. I'm grateful to say my entire sexual experience in life is with the woman I'm married to, not that I haven't felt the attractions but because I had an anchor for my soul that I found in Jesus, I found in the Bible. And as a result, I have now not only four kids who love me, but now I've got ten grandchildren. There's nothing richer in life than to see this growing circle of healthy individuals that look to you for leadership and find it. And I would say to the churches involved, you've got to fight for marriage. You've got to work towards healthier marriages. It's not enough to have a night like this and say, '*Yah, yah, we all need*', but it now requires diligent, ongoing work at the local community level in which people who've been through divorce are helped to recover from that.

1.02.28 Young men and women are growing up with a theology of sex, and an understanding as to why integrity, commitment - you can't have a committed, long-term marriage relationship if you've never learnt to control your sex drive. And if you don't learn that from childhood, you

may never learn it at all. And as a result, there's another broken family, and another wounded group of children, and I think the church's got a great job ahead of it, but let's do the job we were given, of discipling people.

1.02.55

Karl Faase: Good job, Allan. Thank you.

**\*\*Applause\*\***

1.03.01

Karl Faase: We've touched on this a little bit before, but over the last couple of months, there's been a growing push towards polygamous groups who want to get on the bandwagon, which is what you kind of hinted at before and Patrick did as well. But I think this is a fairly key issue. What's to stop, if same-sex marriage comes in, what is to stop polygamous groups - anything?

1.03.24

Patricia Weerakoon:

I don't think so. I mean, I'm not the lawyer, so I should really throw that back to Patrick,

Karl Faase: Well give it a try

Patricia Weerakoon:

But I don't see that there's any reason why it should, because if there is marriage equality, then equality has to really mean that you could marry anyone. Isn't it, Patrick? I'll throw it to you.

Karl Faase: That was a fairly short answer

Patrick Parkinson:

Well, it's great to have a short answer tonight!

Karl Faase: That's a little cruel – keep going

1.03.55

Patrick Parkinson:

I'm a lawyer. Once you move away from the definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman for life, to the exclusion of all others, anything goes.

You cannot possibly say that once you move away from that definition, that you can't have consensual relationships that aren't also to be recognised as marriages. This isn't just 'pie in the sky' stuff. I've just come back from a conference in States. Guess what we were talking about? Recognition of polygamy. They're talking about it in Canada, they're talking about it all over the place now, because there are consensual, polygamous relationships who want to be recognised as

marriage too. After all, it's their human right. So this is a really important debate.

1.04.38

Karl Faase: In that whole process, though, what about the argument that, and this is probably an odd question to ask a lawyer, *'We love each other, isn't that enough?'*

1.04.49

Patrick Parkinson:

It's enough for all sorts of things, but it's not enough for marriage.

1.04.54

John Anderson:

Because you cannot privatise marriage. You see what I mean by that? There's a huge public interest in it. It isn't just about me and my wife, it's about the children I bring into the world, and whether they are going to be emotionally secure, whether they're going to be contributors.

We all know it goes wrong sometimes, but we also know how to maximise the chances of it going right, and how to minimise the chances of the State, that's you in the end, as taxpayers, having to cope with all of the implications of dysfunctional families, from the court systems to the mediation to the taxation burden of multiple dysfunctional families across a community, which are huge, by the way - absolutely enormous.

1.05.40

Allan Meyer: John, can I just add to that one other thing?

The vision that we present to the next generation about what life is all about, and when you begin to destroy the foundations, what vision are we presenting to the next generation and the one beyond that, about a great and glorious and growing nation? We're destroying the vision. I'm happily married at least in part because I saw a vision in my own father and my own mother. My father loved my mother. It moved me. It marked my heart. I've four children; I have now ten grandchildren. I want to present to them a vision that could carry a nation into greatness, not watch it decline into a very disappointing and confusing pudding.

1.06.38

Helen Meyer: Back in the seventies there were groups of people who were doing the polymorphic type of lifestyle, where they had couples together, sex between them, producing children and at one stage there were twenty children and one particular one I know of and fifteen people, adults, and as a result of that Allan and I actually were involved in counselling the children that came out of those kind of set-ups.

- 1.07.10 They were the most disturbed, depressed, anxious, hated growing up in that kind of scene. So if this is where, in terms of the slippery-slope, we're actually going to go, and we've had first-hand experience of dealing with those children, I do not want the children of this society having to deal with that kind of thing.
- 1.07.32  
Karl Faase: Let's go to our last question. We know this is a huge national debate, and people listening tonight may feel that they're just watching it unfold and have no influence. Is there a way for churches and Christians to influence politics and / or the media? John?
- 1.07.45  
John Anderson:  
Look, absolutely. Let me deal with one issue first.
- I sometimes hear it said now that Christians, particularly if they're going to enter the public debate, should leave their faith out of it. Can I say, no-one who understands their history would ever say that.
- 1.08.02 The history of our culture is that our freedoms, our democratic ideals and so forth are based in the Christian worldview that says every individual matters - the story of the Good Samaritan; Ten Commandments - critical to our law, and respect for one another. The Beatitudes - very influential in the way - radical way - in which they turned on its head, the normal, human view, which is that power comes at the point of a gun, or to the bloke with the biggest cheque book.
- 1.08.40 That's not the way we do things in the West. What has made us different was the belief system, the worldview that arose out of Christianity. And I say that because without being proud about it, we should be secure in the contribution, in the knowledge that we've made an enormous contribution to the building of our society.
- 1.08.59 Adam Hochschild, the American secular historian estimates that before the evangelical Christians began their campaign to free people from slavery, three quarters of the world's population lived in one form of slavery or another. It was the Christians who led the greatest human rights movement of all times. And to this day, if you pull the Christians out of the public debate, out of the public square, out of the works that they do in everything from aids orphanages in Tanzania through to, you know, even sitting around cabinet tables making their contribution, the nation would be infinitely the poorer.
- 1.09.36 So without being proud, for pride is a terrible sin, be secure. You do have something to offer. Having said that, know your stuff and then build relationships with power brokers. Get to know and build relationships with your local members, State and Federal. The great majority of them, I say to you in good faith, are reasonable human beings who want to do the right thing. And they will appreciate you

building a constructive relationship with them. Get to know them. Work out how you're going to do it as a church. Tell them you're praying for them, you care for them, you recognise how difficult their job is. They'll love you for it! Because nobody else is telling them that, especially at the moment.

1.1015 Do something for them that the media never does, and recognise that many of them are well-motivated. And then, don't underestimate the power of writing letters to the editor. And young people can tell us what the modern, electronic version of that looks like. But get your voice out there.

1.10.33 Recognise you're going to get clobbered, because there's a lot of vicious language used these days, and I come back to this point; we need to learn civility again, but we need to demonstrate the model by putting our case clearly on a well-informed basis, on a loving basis, on informed and a civil sort of basis, and then turn the other cheek when people are rude in response.

1.10.54

Karl Faase: Patrick, from a lawyer's point of view, then I'll go to Allan from a community development point of view. We've just got a couple of minutes. From a law point of view, is there a way of influencing - is it just what John said - make sure your voice is in the public square?

1.11.08

Patrick Parkinson:

Very much so. You wouldn't believe the impact that a fairly small number of people can have on policy. That's what this whole deal is about at the moment. It's a fairly small number of people who are driving it all. So it's really critical that our voices are heard, and God calls us into the public square. God calls us to be involved. Pray for those who are involved as well, but laws are the reflection of politics and we can influence that.

1.11.36

Karl Faase: Now Allan, you did this locally, didn't you?

1.11.40

Allan Meyer. Yes, I was at Patrick's launch last year on the issue about *For Kids' Sake*, and one of the things that Patrick was saying is that the governments can't fix this. You can't just legislate for healthy marriages. This has got to be done at the local level. There's got to be people working with individuals sitting in groups teaching them things they don't know, helping them to resolve conflicts they've never learnt to resolve, teaching them to think differently, teaching them to have a different vision for how relationships can be. Christians call that discipleship, and we left our church a couple of years ago to devote ourselves to helping churches be healing communities, and at the end

of the day, this has to be done from the highest level to the lowest level.

1.12.27 It's got to be done at the grass roots level. It's got to be done by local churches who care enough about their local communities to teach kids to manage their sex lives, to teach men and women to honour one another. To have a vision for marriage, to bring healing to divorces that have damaged people's lives; to restore them and help them build a better life in the future. Now that's what we devote ourselves to, helping churches do good work at the local level with individuals one life at a time and, for me, that's where we will focus and I would want to just encourage churches - do great restorative ministry in your own area. Build the vision of Christ and His love for people, the power of forgiveness, the power of a vision for life and that will be a contribution you can make that nobody else can.

1.13.16

Karl Faase: Fantastic. So we're out of time, and I trust that you've found tonight helpful, and would you please thank the panel, John Anderson, Patrick Parkinson, Patricia Weerakoon, Allan Meyer and Helen Meyer. So thanks for being with us tonight.

Applaus

Thanks for being with us tonight. Wherever in Australia you've watched this, we trust it's really helped you. To close tonight's webcast, here is a word from the Australian Christian Lobby's Managing Director, Jim Wallace.

1.13.48

Jim Wallace: Well we hope you've enjoyed this great privilege our panel has given us tonight. I hope too, you believe with us that marriage is worth defending. And more importantly, I think for us as Christians, the truth it represents about God's purpose for relationship and the flourishing of children.

Despite what we're told, there is no inevitability about same-sex marriage. Only ten of the one hundred and ninety-six countries in the world have it. But with our Parliament likely to vote on it in August, it's important as both churches and individuals, that you contact your local federal member over July, and graciously confirm its importance to you. But first, let's get your friends to love marriage again, and before you leave tonight, watch this and share it on social media. Thanks again for joining us.