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## From the desk of Susan Kornacki - Assistant Reverb Editor

A Christian calls for marriage equality

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Five days ago Fredonia students rallied for marriage equality in the amphitheater. I was one of them. Here we are, on a college campus in Western New York – theoretically a liberal space – holding up signs to demand that this civil rights infringement be rectified. A few days later, I participated in a conversation in which someone told me about a “very Christian” family that has cut off communication with their daughter because she is in a relationship with a woman. Going from the former experience to the latter left me reeling with a severe case of culture shock. What is going on?

I am a Christian and an ally. I want to make my perspective clear now, to demonstrate that the combination is absolutely possible, and to openly air my biases. The Bible has certainly been quoted to me by other self-identifying Christians who remind me that marriage is a union reserved solely for the heterosexual couples out there. Although I’ve read those passages, too, I find it hard to ignore the fact that the Bible was composed centuries ago, in a completely different cultural context. Divorce was unthinkable in most societies at that time, and today it is frequent and common. Countless other aspects of western culture and its many, many subdivisions have evolved since then, and I am all for adding gay marriage to this already extensive list. And in my opinion, when Christ said “Love your neighbor as yourself,” he was not implying, “...unless you want to marginalize him or her for having a different sexual orientation than you, in which case, disenfranchise him or her as much as possible, legally and socially.”



But all interpretations aside, let’s look at the biology of the situation. The belief that being gay is purely the result of “nurture” factors like environment, dynamics and social context is at the heart of many debates around this issue. The nurture argument is founded on obsolete logic. Current scientific data indicates that sexual orientation is determined by hormonal levels during the early stages of fetal development. The Encyclopedia of Children’s Health (2010) attributes it to “complex interaction between anatomical and hormonal influences during fetal development.” Tom Moon, MFT’s adoption study compared children to their biological parents and their adoptive parents, finding data that indicated sexual orientation is genetic. This data appeared in his article “Is It Learned or Biological?” published in the San Francisco Bay Times in 2006. His research also conducted a twin study, the results of which indicated that twins share traits of homosexuality more often than left handedness, “suggesting that genetics plays an even greater role in sexual orientation than in handedness” (www.procon.org). Frederick Whitam, PhD, a sociology professor at Arizona State University, addresses the counterargument that gay behaviors are learned by stating that during the past 50 years, “not a single bit of scientific evidence suggests that sexual orientation is learned has appeared.” Put in a genetic context, our state’s legal discrimination against the LGBTQ community has some distinctly racist undertones.

And even if it were a choice, what then? This is the land of the free and the home of the brave, after all. Why not marry exactly who you want to marry? The inability to do so has profound detrimental effects. Certain adoption agencies will not consider adoption applications from unmarried couples, which can include same sex partnerships. Other agencies will only allow one individual to legally adopt the child, in the absence of a marriage license. In these cases, only the adopting parent retains legal rights to the child, which can include the right to enter the emergency room as a family member in some states.

I want to end on an optimistic note. My mother works at an elementary school managed by a principle who is gay. He regularly throws dinner parties for the teachers, which he co-hosts with his partner. This situation never ceases to make my heart happy: forty years ago, when pedophilia and homosexuality were frequently overlapped, confused and combined in public dialogues, individuals in administrative positions would often lose their jobs because of their sexual orientation. A gay, out school administrator would be unthinkable. As a society, we are beginning to step out of the dangerously claustrophobic box of homophobia. Now let’s take a step further and stand beside the parents locked out of the emergency room as their daughter or son cries. No parent – or child – should endure such pain and humiliation, and no individual should be told he or she is an unfit parent because of a hormonal reaction that occurred before he or she was born. Christian or atheist or anything in between, let’s move toward a fairer future for our friends and for the next generation.



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