

From the Experts

Focus on the Family – July 2006

From Dr. Dobson

Q. I read recently that the definition of the family needed to be revised in light of cultural changes. The writer said a family should be thought of as “a circle of love,” including any individuals who were deeply attached to each other. Somehow I know this is wrong but can’t articulate why. How do you see it?

A. I am familiar with the effort to redefine the family. It is motivated by homosexual activists and others who see this institution as a barrier to the social engineering they hope to accomplish. But what is the traditional definition of the family? It is a group of individuals who are related to one another by marriage, birth or adoption – nothing more, nothing else. The family was divinely instituted and sanctioned in the beginning, when God created one man and one woman, brought them together, and commanded them to “be fruitful and multiply.” This is where we begin, and this is where we must stand.

By contrast, if the term *family* refers to any group of people who love each other, then the term ceases to have meaning. In that case, five homosexual men can be a “family” until one feels unloved, and then there are four.

Under such a definition, one man and six women could be regarded as a legal entity, reintroducing the debate over polygamy. We thought we settled that issue in the 1880s.

It would also be possible for parents who dislike a rebellious teenager to opt him out of the “circle of love,” thus depriving him of any legal identity with the family. With such amorphous terms, wives would have no greater legal protection than female acquaintances with whom men become infatuated. We end up with an unstable social structure rife with potential for disaster.

There is good reason, then, to defend the narrow legal definition of the family as understood over the centuries. After all, the family as I have characterized it is not merely human in origin. It is God’s marvelous creation. And He has not included casual social relationships – even the most loving ones – within that bond of kinship. Nor should we.