

***A Message from Dr. Henry Harbuck, AEGA Overseer
President, about this important article:***



I have dispensed with my monthly teaching in order to feature the article below on an urgent issue currently facing the Christian world. This excellent piece is written by AEGA minister, Rev. Christine Hagion-Rzephka of California.

Several ministers have already contacted AEGA with concerns regarding this important matter, asking what impact it could have for ministers and churches. Detailing the upcoming **Proposition 8 initiative**, Rev. Hagion-Rzephka outlines both the spiritual and governmental facts, stressing how important it is that we, as Christians, bind together. Likewise, it is essential that we not only pray, but become involved in the legislative process in order to protect the rights of our churches and ministries.

This is one reason that AEGA is a member of, and supports The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), and its mission to provide a biblical voice in governmental affairs. For more information on the NAE go to www.nae.net

*Sincerely, In HIS Service
Dr. Henry Harbuck/AEGA General Overseer*



Call to Prayer: The Fight to Restore Marriage

By Rev. Christine Hagion Rzepka,
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What are the facts?

In the year 2000, 61% of Californian voters approved Proposition 22, which simply stated: “Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.” Yet on Valentine’s Day in 2004, Mayor Gavin Newsom ordered the clerks in the City and County of San Francisco to begin allowing gay couples to marry in violation of the law. Less than two months later, the California Supreme Court ruled that Mayor Newsom had overstepped his authority, and ordered clerks to stop performing same-sex marriages.

But same-sex couples who had obtained these illegal “marriages” filed lawsuits, alleging that their rights were being violated. Homosexual rights groups mischaracterized Proposition 22, which had been the law of the land for eight years, as a ban on gay marriage. This spring, a ruling by 4 judges on the California Supreme Court overturned the will of the people by claiming that Proposition 22 was unconstitutional, affirming that same-sex couples had a fundamental right to get married. Since then, a political whirlwind has overtaken the state of California.

In order to rectify this issue, several churches and religious groups came together to put Proposition 8 on the ballot. Featuring the same 14 words as Proposition 22; the ballot measure will include this language in the state constitution itself, not in some obscure family law code. By inserting these words into the constitution, activist judges and liberal legislatures would be unable to overrule the will of the people by attempting to redefine marriage. Similar measures are also on the ballot in Arizona and Florida. Other states are facing the issue too: 37 states already have these marriage amendments.

What about the rights of gay and lesbian couples?

Proposition 8 does not eliminate any rights from gay or lesbian couples. They “shall have the same rights, protections, and benefits” as spouses, according to Family Code section 297.5), but it would not be called marriage.

California law does not recognize civil unions, but does offer domestic partnership registries that allow many of the same benefits of marriage (private, legally enforceable agreements related to joint property and mutual support, sometimes referred to as “Marvin agreements”).

What is at stake?

If this initiative fails, schoolteachers will be required to tell kindergarten children that there is no difference between traditional marriage and gay marriage. Little Willy might have “two daddies,” while Heather has “two mommies,” and Jane has a mommy and a daddy. This is very confusing for little children whose gender identities are just beginning to develop.

If Proposition 8 does not pass, churches and religious organizations will be subject to numerous legal vulnerabilities. Churches may lose their tax-exempt status if they refuse to perform a same-sex marriage ceremony or decline to rent their church facilities to a same-sex couple for a wedding reception. This is not merely propaganda: a New Jersey ministry was stripped of their nonprofit status for turning down a lesbian couple’s request to be married in their chapel. If Proposition 8 fails, pastors may be compelled by state law to perform a marriage ceremony for a same-sex couple, even if it violates his or her beliefs. This is not the law currently, but there are laws that compel Christian physicians, against their will, to perform in vitro fertilization for same-sex couples, regardless of their faith-based objections. If Proposition 8 is unsuccessful, you may be sued for not accepting a homosexual couple into a marriage retreat, or because someone on your church staff wants health insurance for their same-sex partner.

Currently, only the states of Massachusetts and California perform same-sex marriages. Since the Supreme Court decision, same-sex couples from across the nation are flooding into California to obtain a wedding license. Because there is no residency requirement, they have a quick ceremony, and go back to their home state where they will push to have their same-sex marriages recognized. Homosexual rights groups have advised their constituents to postpone filing lawsuits until after the election. If Prop 8 does not pass, these same-sex couples will file lawsuits to force the other 48 states to accept gay marriage. Imagine how this would play out in Texas, or in the Bible belt!

Without Proposition 8, marriage can be redefined any of a number of different ways. If marriage is no longer limited only to one man and one woman, other areas are open for debate, as well, including: the number of individuals involved (polygamy), age limits (no longer limited to adults), and other variations (perhaps not limiting marriage to humans). Throughout history, marriage has been defined primarily as the union of one man and one woman. When we hear of practices such as polygamy—which is still practiced in a few civilizations—many of us cringe. When we read in the newspapers today of an older man marrying a pre-teen girl to pay off a family debt, we are outraged. We react this way because the fundamental definition of marriage, as old as life itself, is being violated. God has, in fact, written it on our hearts (Jer. 31:33) For centuries, marriage has been understood to be between one man and one woman. This is true across the world, regardless of language and culture, even in the most underdeveloped nations.

What is the responsibility of God's people to this issue?

As Bible-believing Christians, we know that God instituted marriage in the Garden. It is therefore not a social institution, but a spiritual one. When He fashioned woman from the rib of man, and presented Eve to Adam, it was a heavenly foreshadowing of what remains our destiny: the Bride being presented to Jesus Christ, our Bridegroom. Marriage represents the relationship between God and His people—that's why Satan is trying so hard to destroy it.

Scripture says that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and the rulers of darkness in this world (Eph. 6:12). The gay and lesbian community's attempt to force the dominant culture to accept homosexuality is not political; it is demonic. We aren't fighting against the gay man or the lesbian woman, nor are we trying to deny them their rights: we are fighting the spiritual forces behind this attempted redefinition of marriage. The gay man and the lesbian woman are people for whom Christ died, but they have been blinded by the evil one (Satan), who causes them to do things contrary to their nature. The homosexuals are not our adversary: Our enemy is the one who has taken them captive against their will.

We must not give in to apathy and complacency, but we must rise to the occasion. Even if you are miles away from this conflict, do not think that it has nothing to do with you or your church or ministry. It is often said that "as California goes, so goes the nation." An Egyptian pastor remarked that the entire Middle East is watching what is happening in California, because what happens here on the West Coast will soon be affecting what happens there. If we fail in getting this legislation passed, it might be months, or it might be years, but you too will soon be faced with this same dilemma. How would your church fare if you were suddenly slapped with a \$400,000 property tax bill, on top of your regular expenses, because you refused to perform a wedding ceremony for a same-sex couple?

Call to Global Prayer

God's people, all across the globe, must gather together to pray. We must push back the forces of darkness that are attempting to destroy the very thing that God authored to portray His image in the earth. Moses interceded when God was ready to destroy his people Israel in the desert (Ex. 32:9-14). The prayers of *one man* affected the destiny of a nation! How much more so if all the believers around the world were to pray for America in its most desperate hour?

God promises us in II Chronicles 7:14 that if we—God's people—will humble ourselves, confess our sin, and pray, that He would heal our land. According to this verse, God holds *His people* accountable for the future, not the politicians. In one of the rallies for traditional marriage, it was said that the future of America does not lie with the houses of Congress, the president, or with the judges. Even if you are on the other side of the globe, cry out to the God of heaven to reverse the devilish decision that legitimized perversion and petition Him to restore marriage as He intended it to be, for our children and for their future! Call out to Him to overturn this earthly injustice, and for His purposes to be fulfilled on this planet, as it is in the heavens.

Many churches across California have committed to 40 days of prayer and fasting in the time period leading up to the election. Please join with your brothers and sisters in America who are storming the heavens with their petitions that God's righteousness would once again be the law of the land.

Rev. Chrstine Hagion Rzepka

