

“Yes” Is the Natural Vote

I have shared in this column several times that naturally, all Christians should not have an issue voting yes for all four amendments. All four amendments are simply and clearly about equality between male and female in the constitution. It is my view that gender equality is a Creation design and a post-Calvary mandate. There is no debate or doubt in my heart about this subject. Under the constitution, all human beings are to have the same rights and privileges. All human beings are to have the freedom to have full access and opportunity, and to have equal voice, vote, authority, and protection.

It is sad that the constitution did not fully reflect that from its beginning. It is my view that the reason these rights were not fully embedded in our constitution from day one is because our constitution and constitutions of many other countries were drafted in a culture of male superiority and privileges. It certainly might not be the fault of our own founders but those who constructed the model constitution that we adapted. Just within one hundred years ago in many countries only men could vote. In some countries, only whites could vote and have full rights and privileges under the constitution.

The constitution is a governing document that is to reflect equality and speak to a pluralistic society. That is, under the constitution, every citizen of The Bahamas is to have the same rights, without prejudices. This has nothing to do with who washes the dishes in the home or who stays at home full time. This is not even a set of “required” roles in a relationship. This is simply providing openness, freedom, privileges, rights, oneness, access, opportunity, for both male and female.

There are some that have a focus on preventing same sex marriage. Thus their views are skewed into a direction where the constitution amendments are not leading us. The wording and intent of the amendments are clear. There is no suggestion, nor implication, regarding same sex marriage. The irony is that, from the discussions I have heard, many who are against amendment four, really, in principle agree with it. However, since they have what they believe is the Christian’s duty to prevent same sex marriage, they read into every sentence the introduction of same sex marriage. Hence, they are willing to deny equal rights to their own family, children, grandchildren, friends, just because they do not want same sex marriage; or just because they have a fear of same sex marriage being legally practiced in our land.

I want to remind all readers of this important point. If you study countries around the world where same sex marriage has been introduced, you will note carefully that the drive for same sex marriage did not initially begin because the citizens requested a change in their constitution, or that some rights were missing in the constitution. The drive first started because some citizens simply felt it was their right. It's simply that. That propelled them to push for what they believe. Although we do not have any evidence so far that any group in The Bahamas is requesting same sex marriage, it is important to understand that the fear coming from the extreme fundamentalists is not warranted. A change in the constitution is not what propels people to demand freedom or equal rights. It is because of awareness, education, understanding, and one's feelings or concept of equal rights. Then, when they notice that the judicial system or constitutional documents do not grant that full access, they seek to make it happen. Note that we have no such drive as yet in our country regarding same sex marriage. Note also, that request for the right for same sex marriage can come with or without the changes in the constitution. It is not related.

I must draw your attention to the country of Jamaica. The change for equal rights in the constitution has already been done. They were able to understand the philosophical difference between constitutional right and behavior. Ironically, they have one of the strongest drives against same sex marriage in the Caribbean, even though they agreed on a similar amendment as ours. They do not connect the two. Why can't we do the same?

I really wish our religious leaders would focus on preaching and living the gospel instead of demanding or "requiring national" religious standards. I wish they would focus on and teach their members how to live in a sinful world and to expose the gospel and not impose it. In my study of Holy Scripture, I have never read where the writers, particularly the New Testament, insisted that God's people demand that the country have laws that match the Bible. There are myriad of passages where God's people are asked to "live the gospel" and be "witnesses." The strongest language about the Christian's role and behavior is this one found in Ephesians 5:3-10:

"3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but

rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.[a] 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord.”

Note carefully that is about living a good life and not demanding constitutional change. It is imperative to understand that same sex relationship was very, very high in the Roman and Greek world and during the time of the New Testament. However, God “demanded” His people to live the Gospel, but there is no insistence that they must persuade the government to make constitutional change to parallel with their behavior. Why is that? Because religious liberty and religious freedom in a country means the freedom to believe and practice any religion one chooses, or not to have any religious belief at all. This freedom must be guaranteed by the constitution. This frightens some Christians, because they see themselves as purifiers of the nation through laws, instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to purify people’s hearts.

Dear readers, voting yes will not open the way for same sex marriage. On the other hand, voting no will not prevent it either. This amendment has absolutely nothing to do with same sex marriage. Let us protect the rights of the generations to come, and keep our country free with equal rights for all under the law.

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