

We Are Afraid of the SSM

It's a standard bit of rhetoric: What are you afraid of, Christians? How will Same-Sex Marriage affect you?



We can respond defensively. But the emotionally honest answer is “Yes, actually there are some things we are afraid of, and we wish you’d take them seriously.” And it’s got nothing to do with the stereotype of people trembling at the prospect of fanatical gays sweeping over the horizon to gobble up society.

Rather, to be honest, we are afraid, justifiably or not, that Same-Sex Marriage would...

1. Lead to the use of anti-discrimination law to restrict or dictate business practices. Some may agree on how civil unions and anti-discrimination law in the United Kingdom have lead to the prosecution of small-time B&B owners who, in good conscience, would not rent their rooms to unmarried (defined traditionally) couples. But the question of “do we want that here?” is not even being asked. (Example 1, Example 2)
2. Lead to the sacking of people from jobs, particularly in the public sector, if they espouse a different view, or wish to excuse themselves from compromising their conscience. (Example 1, Example 2)
3. Lead to the insistence that churches celebrate gay weddings, or change their liturgies to remove references to “between a man and a woman.” (Example)
4. Lead to mandatory pro-homosexual education of children against the conscience of parents. (Example 1, Example 2)

And that's before you get on to the "afraid of how this will change my society..." fears.

Whether we like it or not these stories are "out there" and they raise genuine concerns in genuine folk about their freedom to think, speak and raise their children. Even if those concerns are unrealistic or inapplicable in our context, they need to be respectfully addressed. Couching the same sex marriage debate in terms of "human rights" only absolutises the rhetoric and pours fuel on the fire of fear.

For conversation to happen fears must be both acknowledged without blame, and respected without belittlement. Can that happen in Tasmania?