

# MIKE HUCKABEE

## A Simple Government

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Twelve Things  
*We Really Need*  
from Washington  
(and a Trillion  
That We Don't!)

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SENTINEL



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*Quit Digging Your Grave with a Knife and Fork*

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*The easiest job in the world is to criticize and condemn the political figures who actually subject themselves to the torturous process of campaigning and governing. I've been on the receiving end, and as a talk-show host for both radio and television, I've dished some out as well, although I've tried to do it honestly and even fairly.*

*Some of the Bronx cheers we send up to those in office are well deserved, but most of the harshest critics offer their crusty curses without having the personal courage to ever put themselves on the ballot.*

*While there are some absolute bums in the business, there are many very honorable people who seek office and serve faithfully for all the right reasons. It's been my distinct pleasure to work with many good and decent public servants who were Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. Many served at extraordinary personal and financial sacrifice and gave up their privacy, their schedules, and their leisure time to live a life of constant travel and time away from home and endure the pressure and pain of the political grind.*

*To the many good people who do more than complain, but commit; who do more than scream, but serve; who do more than oppose, but actually propose ideas; who do more than run from their statements by hiding under the cover of anonymous blogs and phone-ins to talk radio and instead run directly into the flames of political candidacy, I dedicate this book. Without those willing to endure the process of our political system, our great republic wouldn't survive.*

*God bless you!*

# Introduction

*A government big enough to give you everything you want is also big enough to take away everything you have.*

—Barry Goldwater

Since Barack Obama was elected, plenty of books have been written criticizing his administration and accusing him of all sorts of things—from being a Marxist to lying about his citizenship to being a Muslim. But if you know me or if you’re familiar with my commentaries on TV and radio, you know that I don’t like to make politics personal. That’s because I was raised to believe in the Golden Rule, and I don’t know about you, but I certainly don’t like being called names or ridiculed. So I want to start out by saying that if you’ve come here looking for a personal attack on President Obama and those in Washington, you should head to another shelf in the bookstore.

I don’t doubt for a moment that Barack Obama loves our country and wants to make it better. In my political career, I’ve found that to be true, more often than not, about people who take a position different from mine. Respect and civility go a long way in campaigns and governance.

That being said, I have never been afraid to criticize a person when I think it’s appropriate, especially when it comes to those who run our country. I believe that every American has a right and a responsibility to speak up when they’re unhappy with the way our government is run, and that’s why I’m writing this book. Because as much as I respect President Obama as a human being, I can’t help but think that just about everything he thinks is good for America is actually bad for our present and worse for our future.

You are probably reading this book in February 2011, but thanks to the practical demands of publishing, I’m actually writing it in the fall of 2010. As I sit here, our country is mired in a crisis that has grown progressively (no pun intended) worse since Obama entered the White House. Our national unemployment rate is stuck at around 10 percent; our budget deficit is spiraling to unprecedented levels; we’ve adopted a federal health-care system that promises to raise costs and worsen care, even though most Americans didn’t want it in the first place. On top of all that, we face threats from abroad in the form of terrorism, illegal and out-of-control immigration, and two wars (though allegedly the war in Iraq is over) that we can’t seem to win. Meanwhile, our image abroad is rapidly sinking to where it was during the Carter years, as we’ve turned our backs on some of our most trusted international allies, like Israel, in favor of “diplomatic relations” with enemies like Russia and Iran.

We were promised better than this. The election of 2008 was supposed to signal the arrival of a “postpartisan” presidency. Happy days! Joy to the world! Well, did that

happen? Candidate Obama said he would discover common ground between the two major parties and come up with public-policy answers that both sides could consider viable. Instead, President Obama has shown himself to be the *most* partisan president in my lifetime, hands down. In this respect, he has far outdistanced any political gamesmanship ever practiced by any president before him, whether Democrat or Republican. Bright as he seems to be, he consistently mistakes his election for a mandate to compromise our nation's future with breathtakingly sweeping plans like socialized medicine and so-called financial reform. And make no mistake about this: Those schemes and others have already saddled our descendants for generations with a mountain of debt that they can never pay back. (I'll have more to say about this later, with the scary numbers to prove it.)

In our political tradition, as you know, it's business as usual for candidates to campaign with harsh words for the opposition. The problem comes when the bickering continues after the swearing in. A true leader's Job One is to bring people together, not just mouth partisan slogans, and as hard as it may be to believe in our increasingly partisan world, I've known people on both sides of the aisle who have exhibited such character. One of those people is former president and fellow Arkansan Bill Clinton. Even though he strenuously campaigned for every opponent I ever had in Arkansas—whether I was running for U.S. senator, lieutenant governor, or governor—not once did he stoop to personal attacks or snarky comments about my being a Republican. He treated his opponents with respect and civility.

Well, I guess these are different times. But my biggest problem with President Obama isn't his insistent partisanship; it's his reliance on advice from people who don't understand the real world that you and I live in. Obama has overloaded his administration with policy wonks and Ivy League professors because he speaks their language. Virtually no one on his team has had experience running anything; they probably couldn't even run a lemonade stand. Their abstract theories, airy platitudes, and unrealistic promises may sound nice on paper or in a congressional debate, but in reality these politicians are just trying to cover up their own ignorance.

You don't need the wisdom of Solomon to see that their lack of experience is the reason we're currently experiencing an economic crisis. Think about it. When you're a governor or mayor—or even a small-business owner—you don't have the option of printing money to cover your mistakes or to buy things you can't afford. I know. In Arkansas I had to balance the budget the old-fashioned way: The money coming into the state coffers had to be greater than or at least equal to the money going out. The result? Sometimes hard choices had to be made, but I made them. As those great political philosophers the Rolling Stones said, you can't always get what you want.

We have to hold the federal government to the same standard, and not only on the budget. On this and other issues there is a strong and building urgency to repair our weakened nation and rebuild the confidence of the American people. We need to go back to the first principles that the Founders built into our amazing Constitution. That means, in part, that we need decisive action now, not professorial dialogue and insanely complicated schemes that kowtow to special interests (like the three thousand pages of the ObamaCare bill).

In short, we need a government that works for the people. We need a simple government.

Don't get me wrong: I know that many of the nation's problems are highly complex. But I also know that the governing principles that can solve them, if we work together, are simple. Justice, integrity, freedom—the basic notions upon which America was founded—are simple. Somewhere along the way, too many of our leaders have picked up the idea that it takes something like rocket science or brain surgery to deal with public problems. Wrong. When a new law is too long for anyone to read, let alone understand, it's too long, period!

I've tried to follow the same principle in writing this book. First, I've approached the various topics here with the *simple* underlying principles that helped make our country strong. Then, in each case, I've explored solutions that would be consistent with those bedrock ideals.

I'm not trying to win a Pulitzer Prize or impress the folks at Harvard, Yale, or Stanford—if they'd even listen to me! I'm writing directly to everyone who loves America and believes that it's still the greatest country in the world (and can become even greater once we get back to basics) despite today's serious challenges. I'm writing for people who aren't ashamed to eat hot dogs and hamburgers (in moderation!) and probably think that a meal of snails is better suited to birds and fish than to humans.

*Simply* put, in other words, this book is intended for about 80 percent of the American people. And if just half of that group would read it and take it to heart, my wife and I would be set for quite a few of the golden years! But more important, my readers would be empowered and energized to restore clarity and common sense to our national government, just as the Founders intended.

Along the way, I hope to tell you some things you've probably never heard and remind you of some important things you may have forgotten, while keeping it all entertaining enough that you won't fall asleep midparagraph.

I also promise to be honest—perhaps painfully and brutally honest, when necessary. My goal is to be clear and open, and if that offends some people I'm all right with that. Personally, I'm so sick of the hypocritical, cynical, uninformed nonsense I've read and heard lately that I'd prefer to risk having some readers hate this book because they *did* understand it rather than have many hate it because they *didn't* understand it.

Of course, what I really hope is that, because you do understand the book, you'll *love* it. Call me vain if you want, but I think you're going to!

Mike Huckabee  
October 2010

## CHAPTER ONE

# The Most Important Form of Government Is a Father, a Mother, and Children

*We Need a Return to Family Values*

There's an old Japanese proverb that says, "It is easier to rule a kingdom than to regulate a family." I don't know who said this, but as someone who's done both (though I'd hardly call Arkansas a kingdom), I can say with absolute certainty that he was right.

I'll bet you've never thought of your family as a government. But when you get right down to it, it's the form of government that matters most—much more than Congress, or your state legislature, or even your neighborhood block association. Get your family right, and its strength will wind its way up to the highest levels of global power. Of course, the reverse is also true: When the family fails, so do the other organizing structures around it.

Why does a person commit a heinous crime—use a deadly weapon to rob someone, vandalize a school, rape a woman, murder a hapless victim for twenty dollars, or steal millions from investors (perhaps including friends and relatives) in a Ponzi scheme? Are these acts caused by incomprehensible wickedness? Are these people just plain bad? No, it's really very simple. These are people who failed to grasp—or were never offered—the simplest lessons of self-discipline, respect for others, and a strong sense of human decency. And where should those lessons be taught and learned? It's not the job of a school, a workplace, or even a church to provide these most basic of life lessons (though we shouldn't forget about them there either). And besides, even when we do rely on institutions for these lessons, they usually fail.

No, these lessons cannot be taught by a teacher, boss, or minister. In order to create truly valuable and respectful citizens, these lessons need to be taught at home. By the time we enter school or start a job, we should have learned how to behave. I'm not usually a pessimist, as you probably know, but I'm afraid that if a child has not learned to behave by age four or so, he or she never will.

When I was a child and did something my mother found objectionable, she'd say, with some exasperation, "Were you raised by wolves?" Of course (being objectionable), my immediate inclination was to whip back a smart-aleck answer like

“No, ma’am. I got it from you!” But I never did because I knew that the wolf in her would come out and probably chew me out. Plus, I knew what she meant: This was her way of reminding me that I was supposed to try to achieve a certain level of civil behavior. I might even demonstrate a notable difference from animals in the wild by using a napkin, saying a blessing before diving into a plate of food, or washing up before sitting down to eat. Such civilized rules of courtesy, kindness, and unselfishness were expected of me not merely so that I could get what I wanted but because, quite simply, they were *right*.

To this day, I try to behave the way my mother wanted me to—not because I’m afraid of being grounded (my wife does that now) but because she taught me the difference between right and wrong and showed me by example how to behave. These principles originate, of course, from the family.

Okay, let me say it before you do: No family is perfect, and even children raised in wonderful families can turn out to be like wolves. Still, it makes sense that children nurtured with rules are far more likely to follow them than those given free rein to follow their most primal instincts of “self first, others second.” In the national ongoing conversation about how to change “government” and make “society” better, I rarely hear a reference to the obvious starting place: the creation and nurturing of functioning families, in which a mother and a father bring up their offspring with the understanding that the older generation is training the younger to be their replacements.

This essential belief is not (at least it shouldn’t be) a partisan issue, but sometimes it can seem like one. For example, President Obama, speaking to the West Point graduating class on May 22, 2010, said, “American innovation must be the foundation of American power.” Yes, innovation is important (as I will discuss in later chapters of this book), but, to repeat, I believe that the foundation of American power has always been and must continue to be . . . (drum roll, please!) . . . the American family.

On this issue, as on so many others, I cast my lot with Ronald Reagan, who said, “The family has always been the cornerstone of American society. Our families nurture, preserve, and pass on to each succeeding generation the values we share and cherish, values that are the foundation of our freedom.”

It should surprise no one—certainly it would not have surprised President Reagan—that those who now want to “transform” traditional America recognize this truth from the opposite direction and have placed the American family smack in the crosshairs. You know this. You see it every day. The family structure that made this country the most powerful and prosperous in the history of the world—father, mother, children—is under assault today as never before.

As parents and even grandparents, what can we do? Simple. We fight back. What happens in our day to the traditional family will determine whether we remain a morally healthy nation of self-reliant families, for the most part, or degenerate into a decadent welfare state of shattered, chaotic, and dependent families.

If you think I’m exaggerating, a little history lesson might be in order. (Many of us somehow managed to get a high school diploma even with a meager knowledge of history, but I digress. . . .) In 1917, when the communists seized power in Russia, they immediately and frankly set out to destroy what they saw as the two biggest threats to their authority: religion and the family. According to an article in the July 1926 issue

of *Atlantic Monthly*, the Bolsheviks hated the institution of the family with a fierce passion. They forbade all religious ceremonies, which had the effect of turning marriage into just a piece of paper issued by a clerk. In turn, marriage could be undone in a matter of minutes by a piece of paper from another clerk. The ultimate aim of this new socialist state, so far as family was concerned, was to promulgate free love. Along the same lines, abortions were officially sanctioned and paid for by the government.

The article contained some startling facts to back up the report:

It was not an unusual occurrence for a boy of twenty to have had three or four wives, or for a girl of the same age to have had three or four abortions. Some men have twenty wives, living a week with one, a month with another. . . . They have children with all of them, and these children are thrown on the street for lack of support.

The party's long-term goal? To throw families into chaos, thus making children loyal to the state rather than to their parents. To that end, children still living at home were told to keep a close eye on their parents and, if they criticized the regime, turn them in to the authorities. So now the young, after all, knew better than the old!

Almost one hundred years later, of course, the Soviet Union has collapsed. We don't live in the shadow of the cold war; but threats lurk elsewhere. The legacies of this massive failed "experiment" are the ideas of sexual revolution that live on and wreak havoc in our own society today through legalized abortions (and the movement in favor of having them funded by the government), seemingly casual divorce (for the first time, in 2010 fewer than 50 percent of American adults were married), growing nonchalance about unwed pregnancy among teens, and, finally, the fevered attempts to extend the definition of marriage beyond "one man, one woman." Not even the heirs of Marx and Lenin thought of going that far!

## **Pull Up the Drawbridge**

From our friends across the pond, the Brits, we long ago adopted the idea that "a man's home is his castle." Fine, so far as that goes, but we must remember this: Castles were built not as mansions or showcases to impress the neighbors but as fortresses that would provide protection from ruthless enemies. Not to sound paranoid (just realistic), but I believe that in America today, as in the Russia of 1917, the family has lots of enemies—not all of them clearly identifying themselves or riding up armed and mounted on a steed. So parents really do need to draw up the drawbridge against a widespread culture of vulgarity and violence. You don't have a drawbridge? That's fine, because you have something better—parental guidance. If you can monitor the influence the world has on your kids and fulfill your parental responsibility by acting as the filter representing traditional values, then you will be, in effect, keeping out any enemies threatening to take over your family.

When it comes to questionable influences, just where do you draw the line? Well, you could start with a simple premise about what's beaming in on the airwaves: Much

of it deserves to land squarely in the moat. But some stuff is worse than other stuff.

Not to give government a pass here (we'll get to them), but I'd argue that pop music is often the worst culprit, with "reality TV" (talk about untruth in advertising) running a close second. Without parental guidance, an impressionable girl might learn that the way to succeed is to shed her innocence as early as possible. That means, for starters, that becoming recognized in the public eye as a talented young woman involves seminudity, plastic surgery, and maybe even a stripper pole. Also, posting naked pictures or a sex video on the Internet is a guarantee of instant attention.

This is, to some extent, just a contemporary exaggeration and exploitation of the old story of the teen years. Many girls, particularly those who don't have a dad at home, believe that male approval in the form of a boyfriend is essential to existence. I don't think any sane person who doesn't live under a boulder would try to argue otherwise. Some boys sense this very well (hello!), pressuring girls to "get with the program." One good message that did come out of feminism—that girls can write their own program instead of just trying to please boys—is now out the window among many young people, especially when dealing with their peers.

Okay, so you're fully aware of all of these influences, and you're standing warily at the drawbridge. Or maybe by now you're up on the battlements armed with cauldrons of boiling oil. Next step, aside from insisting that your home conform to your values: You have to be vigilant about what goes on in your local schools. That means get out the catapult! To be effective, your reach needs to extend as far as it possibly can.

Here are some things you might want to look into. Is your first grader reading about Dick and Jane getting a puppy named Spot, or is he learning how nice it is that Heather has two mommies? Is your eighth grader studying the fruit and vegetable exports of South American farmlands, or is he practicing how to put a condom on a banana? Or is your child not learning anything at all today after being sent home for wearing an American flag T-shirt on Cinco de Mayo—or any other day?

Don't hesitate to pore over your kids' assigned books and lesson plans. Do the history books teach them that America should be cherished—or blamed for something? Talk with your kids about what goes on in the classroom: Do any teachers preach according to personal agendas that conflict with what you teach at home? Encourage your kids to read widely for themselves, rather than be bound by the assignments from school. Help them understand that they go to school to be educated, not indoctrinated. Class is supposed to be for exercising the mind. That means they need to be taught *how* to think, not *what* to think.

## **Pull Up Some Chairs Around the Table**

Perhaps by this point you think I'm being too optimistic. But I'm also realistic. I know from talking with parents that many are about ready to throw in the towel. They try and try again but don't feel able to counter the peer pressure and insidious media messages that bombard their kids every day. Many have come to believe that they may be fighting a losing battle. The struggle is just too difficult and exhausting.

Well, I get that. But how hard is it to have dinner with your children?

Let me share with you an amazing statistic discovered by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. For the past decade and a half, researchers there have been totting up the differences between teens who eat dinner with their parents “frequently” (defined as being at least five nights a week) and those who do it only three times weekly or less. The results of a CASA report published in 2009 were dramatic:

1. Teens who eat dinner infrequently with their families are *twice* as likely to use tobacco and marijuana as those who have family dinners “frequently.”
2. Similarly, they’re one and a half times more likely to use alcohol.
3. And they’re one and a half times more likely to get mostly Cs or lower in school. (No one’s saying that infrequent family dinners necessarily *cause* bad grades, but there’s clearly some sort of correlation. Try it!)

“The magic of the family dinner comes not from the food on the plate but from who’s at the table and what’s happening there,” explains Elizabeth Planet, CASA’s vice president. “The emotional and social benefits that come from family dinners are priceless.”

That means the food doesn’t have to be fancy, or organic, or even homemade. What counts, evidently, is the time spent together around the table. Good grades; avoidance of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs; closer and warmer family relationships—it’s a scientific fact (not to mention plain old common sense) that something as simple as sharing take-out pizza is associated with all of them!

## Whatever Happened to Dad?

I’ve been criticized many times for talking so much about “social issues” when the *real* issue now, according to some people, is the economy. Well, buckle up, Turbo, because here’s a simple, inarguable fact: Every broken, fatherless family has a tremendous economic impact.

Common sense is clear: The more families can do for themselves, the less they will need from the government. But what happens when there’s no dad in the picture?

Here’s what Robert Rector, a senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation, has to say about that:

The disappearance of marriage in low-income communities is the predominant cause of child poverty in the U.S. today. If poor single mothers were married to the fathers of their children, two-thirds of them would not be poor. . . . When liberals refuse to talk about marriage and the poor in the same breath, they are guilty of willful neglect of the major source of poverty.

Surprise. Liberals are just fine with that, since one of their goals seems to be getting as many people as possible on public assistance.

According to the National Fatherhood Initiative, about one in three American kids lives in a home without a dad on the premises. Are you—like me—stunned to hear

that? Allowing for exceptions, as in all things, the typical portrait of these children is grim indeed. These kids are five times more likely to live in poverty than kids living with both parents. They have higher rates of delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, smoking, and obesity. It gets worse. They have a 125 percent higher risk of suffering from abuse and are twice as likely to drop out of school. You can guess the next stat: Girls raised by a single mother are more likely as teenagers to become pregnant themselves.

Some of you may be inclined to turn away, as if none of this has anything to do with you and your family. In fact, far from affecting only the children directly involved, fatherless families affect all of us and our descendants. The so-called dad deficit added more than \$300 billion to the national deficit in 2010 because of welfare payments to moms. Many of these men are responsible—at least, in the biological sense—for two or *more* single-parent families. Remember Russia in 1917? This is exactly the same problem that the communist regime deliberately created.

Again, a relevant comment from Robert Rector: “[L]iberal politicians . . . have a vested interest in the growth of the welfare state, and nothing grows the welfare state like the disappearance of marriage.” And what happens then? The bigger the welfare state grows, the more powerful it becomes. Beware a government bearing gifts, because every one of them comes with strings attached. Over time, those strings grow into heavy chains.

Basically, the decline of the family is a failure of personal responsibility. The personal rights of each one of us are sacred, a part of our connection to God, but they are linked to our personal responsibilities. If we fail to live up to those responsibilities, we will lose our rights. And the state, following its own agenda, will take over.

## **The Worst of Both Worlds: Out-of-Wedlock Birth and Abortion**

If we could hop into our “way-back machine” and travel to Washington in 1965, we might find a young Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then working at the Department of Labor in his presenatorial days, prepared to issue a report about the rate of out-of-wedlock births among African Americans. He is clearly dismayed to report that it’s almost 25 percent. Now let’s zip forward again to 2008 for the latest statistics then: almost 75 percent, or exactly the reverse of the 1965 ratio of illegitimate-to-legitimate births! I can hear Senator Moynihan now from beyond the grave, intoning, “I *told* you it was getting bad. . . .”

There’s more bad news from 2008. Among whites, out-of-wedlock births were almost 29 percent, higher than the rate among blacks back when Moynihan sounded his alarm. Moreover, at 41 percent, the overall out-of-wedlock birthrate for all Americans was the highest ever, compared with just 5 percent in 1960. So it’s safe to say that *every* group is moving dramatically in the wrong direction.

What to do? Well, when we compare out-of-wedlock births by state, those with higher incomes and education levels show lower rates. Some observers, as you might

imagine, infer that this statistic suggests a socioeconomic problem that can be solved by helping more teens stay in school so that they can go on to college and higher-paying jobs. But wait: It's not quite so elementary, my dear Watson.

Let's look more closely at the situation. While red states do indeed have more out-of-wedlock babies, the blue states have—perhaps you've already guessed it—more abortions. In fact, pregnancy rates do not differ all that much; it's abortion rates that do. As compiled by the Guttmacher Institute (using 2005 statistics, the most recent available), the abortion rate is 6 percent in Mississippi and Utah and 9 percent in Arkansas. But it's 24 percent in Connecticut, 30 percent in New Jersey, and 33 percent in New York. Shockingly, the nation as a whole aborts about 1.2 million babies each year. So no matter what you may have read or heard elsewhere (perhaps from abortion activists), higher education and income levels are not stopping young women from getting pregnant: They're just turning to a different “solution.” Of course, my view is that abortion, rather than actually providing a solution, is instead an even more awful problem.

So while we should be disturbed by the huge number of out-of-wedlock births, we should be even more disturbed that abortions are so common. As hard as it can be to grow up without a dad, there's a far worse fate: not growing up at all because one's life was snuffed out in the womb.

## **Abstinence for Kids Is the True Freedom**

It is clear to me that these two epidemics—out-of-wedlock births and on-demand abortions—are sapping America's moral strength. We have two challenges. On the one hand, we need to reduce the number of pregnancies that so often lead to sad, unstable homes and eventual divorce (assuming that marriage ever had any role to play in the situation in the first place). On the other, the answer to the likelihood that children will grow up in a fatherless home is not to abort them. The strong families this country needs are always built on two shared societal beliefs: the value of marriage and the value of human life.

“Grief still treads upon the heels of pleasure,” wrote English playwright William Congreve in 1693. “Married in haste, we repent at leisure.” That's certainly still true all these years later, as many young people pressured to marry in response to an unplanned pregnancy will attest. But even those who decide not to marry may eventually have reason to “repent,” because the other choices can be equally dismal. As a pastor, I often saw women who suffered wrenching guilt and/or depression after having an abortion or giving a baby up for adoption. I believe these women will feel their loss and anguish for the rest of their lives. As for single mothers, they typically have to interrupt their education, entrust their children to the care of strangers, and marginally support their households on a meager income. (It's then, of course, that the kindly federal government steps in to “help.”)

Kids exposed to mass culture—TV, movies, music, the Internet—are incessantly told that everybody who's “cool” has sex before marriage. What's the prob? Sex is no

more consequential than a handshake, dude, so “hook up” any time you want, and with anybody. After all, doing what you want, what you feel like in the moment—that’s what “freedom” is, right? Too bad our culture doesn’t bother to explain that it is abstinence that is the true freedom. Only abstinence ensures that our children don’t have to take on adult roles before they’re ready. It’s only abstinence, too, that protects their options to pursue their dreams, marry the one they love at the time that’s right, and feel joyful about the choices they’ve made *freely* along the way.

## **Gay Parenthood: A Social Experiment**

I have often been criticized for my outspoken views on gay marriage and homosexuality, so let me be clear. I have no doubt at all that homosexual men and women love their children deeply. Just as deeply as heterosexuals love theirs.

But love alone cannot always provide what children need. If that sounds harsh, bear with me for a moment. My main concern here is that the children, most of whom are heterosexual, will not, and really cannot, get critical early-life lessons in how a heterosexual family functions successfully. In general, men and women bring different outlooks and temperaments to the task of parenting. Those male/female dynamics that make themselves evident in parenting—including even the conflicts and inconsistencies that are likely to arise—teach a child about how men and women relate to each other. In the home with two gay parents, where is that learning going to come from? It’s already challenging enough to grow up, even when the parents are more conventional role models.

Of course, I’m certainly not saying that all heterosexual parents provide, or are even able to provide, a good example to their children. I know that very well from years of conversations in my pastoral study, if not from just walking through a mall. Still, I believe that we’re in denial about potential problems as we see more and more homosexual couples raising families. Essentially, these are experiments to see how well children will fare in such same-sex households. It will be years before we know whether or not our little guinea pigs turn out to be good at marriage and parenthood.

## **Government Breakfast: A Symptom, Not a Solution**

Each year, our friends in Washington decide how much to increase the budget to subsidize school breakfasts. We may disagree among ourselves on the dollar amounts, but few ask why the government is at all responsible for this program. What does it say about our society that so many parents apparently can’t get it together enough to give their children a bowl of cereal and a glass of juice? It is that they just assume, after years of the practice, that it’s the government’s job to pay for school breakfasts? We need to look closely at this program.

After all, the government already has plenty of jobs to do—for example, fighting terrorists (sorry . . . I believe I should have written “man-made-disaster facilitators”). Feeding our kids some breakfast? Our job. Our pioneer forebears—who grew the wheat for their toast and the apples for their juice, who raised the cow for their milk—would be appalled at how pathetic many of us have become.

Let me make clear that I am in no way suggesting that we should stop school breakfasts. Having often seen firsthand the impact of poverty and hunger among American children, I know that if we did, many kids would not get breakfast at all. In a perfect world, the government wouldn't have to feed children a breakfast because their parents would be doing the job. But as you may have noticed, we don't live in a perfect world. My own church is actively involved in going beyond the government program, conducting what we call the “backpack” ministry: It ensures that kids leave school on Fridays with a backpack filled with food for the weekend. We use backpacks so that the child does not suffer the added embarrassment of being seen carrying charitable food donations home.

Result: The child has food for the weekend and returns the empty backpack to school on Monday. The government does not pay for any of this: The people of my church do. This is closer to the ideal, I think. What a family can't do, friends and neighbors can. Government is not at all in the picture. What the friends and neighbors can't do, the church does. If this model were followed all over the country, there would no longer be a need for the government to do the things it's doing—many of which add to the problem instead of solving it. I have long said, and you may have heard me say so on the air, that if all Christians in America actually gave a dime out of each dollar to help “the poor, the widows, and the orphans,” we wouldn't have fifty cents of every dollar confiscated by various levels of government, which will probably mess it up.

## **A Tear in the Social Fabric**

Winston Churchill saw the family this way: “There is no doubt that around the family and home all the greatest virtues, the most dominating virtues of human society, are created, strengthened and maintained.” True, but with this one caveat: We can guard that drawbridge and provide our kids all of the moral lessons we think they need, but it's impossible to wall them off entirely from others who don't receive similar grounding. Unless society as a whole is committed to moral behavior, everything we build for our families can be destroyed in an instant.

Take the mean streets of Chicago, where dozens of children die violently every year. Typically, the only mistake they made was being “in the wrong place at the wrong time.” The columnist Bob Herbert, who has written extensively about this tragedy, interviewed Ester and Eugene Stroud after their sixteen-year-old son, Isaiah, was stabbed to death on his way home after winning a dance contest. This is heartwrenching to read:

Their grief, after nearly a year and a half, seemed still to be weighing on