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■ In my opinion

OPERATION Matrimony

In a bookstore not too long ago, I saw a book called "Marriage Under Fire," by Dr. James Dobson. I was intrigued by the title because safeguarding marriage in an increasingly sick society that routinely tramples and disregards that sacred covenant is a subject very dear to me.

I was delighted by the prospect of reading a book about what we can do to help stem the rampant disintegration of the family caused by divorce, abuse, neglect and adultery. Unfortunately, this was not that book. It took only a quick glance at the dust jacket to find out that Dr. Dobson's book is a 128-page diatribe against gay marriage.

I am disgusted by all the hoopla that's been made about gay marriage lately. I just don't understand how so many self-styled "defenders of marriage" can spend so much time, energy and money trying to safeguard bans on same-sex marriage while our divorce rate is out of control and still climbing.

Homosexuals are not the biggest threat to marriage in this country — heterosexuals are. I'm not saying I support gay marriage, it's just that this issue has never registered much on my radar compared to a much more obvious, and much more imminent threat to our family life: Selfishness and "I"-centered thinking is now the norm. A worldly mentality of self-actualizing psychobabble and inane rationalization that flouts commitment while trying to pass itself off as wisdom has seized our culture.

While everybody gets agitated about gay marriage, we remain our own worst enemies. The divorce and adultery rates are the twin elephants sitting in our living room that nobody wants to acknowledge, let alone do anything about.



GABE BRADLEY
THE WRITING ON THE WALL

In public schools, we're taught sex education, but we're not taught family education. This is just one example of how backward our priorities are (and you know most kids aren't getting lessons in healthy family life at home). Am I a reactionary? On this issue, you bet. There's nothing wrong with being a reactionary when the very core of society is sliding into the abyss, leaving a trail of broken homes and shattered lives in its cruel, destructive wake.

We need to call this situation what it is: an imminent crisis that must be dealt with today — not tomorrow or the next day, today.

In the short run, couples need to decide what to do, not if, but when, adultery makes its way into the relationships. When lost in puppy love, too many couples think it will never happen to them, so they don't think about it. But the statistics clearly show that we're all human, and it happens — a lot. Adultery has run rampant, and there's no segment of the population that's safe. To not have a crisis plan in place is naïve and foolish in this culture. In the long run, we need to work on "affair-proofing" our marriages and eliminating this scourge of unfaithfulness that has had its way with countless couples.

This is a crisis that affects all Americans. The social costs of divorce are so enormous they are al-

most incalculable. The huge cost of the court system, family and child services and loss in productivity is obvious. The real social cost, though, is the mind-boggling increase in violence, crime, drug abuse and other social ills that accompany this epidemic of broken homes.

What's so frustrating about this crisis is that while it has a huge impact on society, there is little the government can do. Society is tearing itself apart, and our government is powerless to stop it; only couples have the power to change the course of our country. One marriage at a time, we need to become a nation of couples who will fight for instead of against each other.

When a marriage is broken, it needs to be fixed. We can't ignore the problem any more than we can walk away from the problem. Sick people need doctors and sick marriages need counselors.

Too often, though, people don't fight for marriage. They figure if it's not easy then they must be doing something wrong, so they walk away. Nothing worthwhile endures without a fight. Love is a choice, not a feeling. Commitment is a decision, not an emotion. And sometimes we have stand by our commitments despite every bit of "wisdom" to the contrary.

One of my favorite movies is Rob Reiner's "The Story of Us," which chronicles the rise, fall and restoration of a marriage. I don't want to ruin the ending of the movie for those who haven't seen it. But for those who have, I'd just like to say that we need to become a nation of people who are willing to say, "Chow Fun's."

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■ Editorial

Jeopardizing the filibuster could muffle minorities

Minorities. They built America, and America was built for them. There will always be unheard minority voices, not just in our nation at large, but in our nation's government as well. As long as our country operates under a two-party system, there will be an unheard voice, and Republican Sen. Bill Frist would do well to remember this fact. As current Senate majority leader, Frist is heading the imminent movement to shut down filibusters against President Bush's judicial nominees.

Adhering to the belief that any senator should be allowed to speak as long as necessary, a filibuster is a tactic wherein a Senate member, usually from the minority party, continues to speak for days on end, holding up debate on other issues and effectively nullifying the motion under discussion. In this manner, the minority party can prevent a vote that they know the majority party will win by way of sheer numbers. Right now, democrats are using the power of filibuster to avoid a vote that would place a sharply conservative judge next in line for the Supreme Court.

It takes 60 votes to shut down the filibuster; Republicans hold only 55 seats in the Senate. If Frist has his way, Senate rules will change for judicial nominations so only 51 votes are necessary to move along a vote.

Stepping outside party lines for just a moment, the dangers of limiting a minority voice should be painstakingly obvious to all politicians. Even some fellow Republican Senators disagree with Frist's proposal, commenting that at some future point the tables will be turned, and it will be the Republican party relying on filibuster until judicial nominees leaning more toward the middle can be selected.

It is also significant that Frist is not asking to change the rule on all filibusters, just those related to approving justices. Of all the reasons to filibuster, it seems that the minority power to halt debate is most important when it comes to the Supreme Court. There are almost no circumstances under which a justice will leave the court; appointees last a lifetime. It hardly seems fair or democratic for the majority party, be it Republican or Democrat, to choose justices leaning so far from the middle that the minority party would wish to filibuster in the first place.

If you consider yourself a liberal, think about it this way: Without the ability to filibuster, current Senate Democrats will be powerless to prevent a Conservative justice from being appointed to the Supreme court, who could then sway the court into finding Roe v. Wade unconstitutional. A disappearance of the filibuster could easily result in a disappearance of the right to abortion.

If you consider yourself a conservative, think about it this way: Without the ability to filibuster, future Senate Republicans will be powerless to prevent a liberal justice, who could sway the court into legalizing gay marriage. Although stopping a filibuster may sound like a good idea for your party right now, a long-term consideration shows that making it difficult for the minority Senate group to filibuster is a bad idea all around. Maybe someone should tell that to Bill Frist.

Oregonians of every political persuasion should call their senator, Gordon Smith at (202) 224-3753 in Washington D.C. or (503) 326-3386 in Portland and proclaim the importance of the filibuster.

■ Guest commentary

Organic and vegan eating spawn good health, sustainable environment

At the April 20 Earth Day festival, you will likely be overwhelmed by the major environmental issues confronting us: preserving wilderness, stopping species extinction, and maintaining clean air and water. Yet, there is one thing little ol' you can do every day to help each of these environmental problems. Drumroll please: Eating plant-based foods, especially organic and those locally grown, and choosing vegan proteins instead of meat, eggs, and dairy, is even more powerful than our current healthy habits of recycling, biking and turning off the water when we brush our teeth. So why not do all these responsible things?

Following the eco-mantra, "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle," eating vegan proteins like nuts, soy, whole grains, peas and beans is all about Reduction. Veganism reduces the waste of land, forests, plant crops, water, fuel and wildlife, as well as the pollution of water, soil and air. The simplest way to explain it is that animal agribusiness uses the majority of our nation's farmland to raise crops for feeding farm animals. These

pesticide-ridden crops use many resources, like fertile soil, water and energy and leave deforestation and desertification in their wake. For the resources we put into raising these crops and the additional water and energy invested in raising, killing and processing animals, we don't get nearly as much in calories or protein out of the resulting animal products. It's an irresponsibly poor return on an investment.

Thousands of people worldwide die daily of hunger-related causes, while we feed over 60 percent of our grains and plants to farm animals. It makes more sense to instead feed people directly with those grains and vegetables.

Compassion in World Farming reports that the world now consumes five times as much meat as it did in the first half of the 20th century. Our current excesses of meat and dairy aren't normal and certainly cannot be sustained. To keep America eating all this excess meat and dairy, factory farms are required. By intensively farming over 10 billion animals annually and consolidating

their urine and feces, we are fouling our air and water and ruining our potential for a healthy future. In fact, animal agribusiness is the largest polluter of America's rivers and streams. What's more, big money agribusiness lobbyists are ensuring that the government thinks of its short-term interests and not what's best for the public. Since we live in a market-based economy, that means we as individual consumers need to pick up the slack and financially support more sustainable, plant-based organic foods instead of animal agribusiness. It's up to us.

So next time you're wondering what to get for lunch on campus, bypass Subway and go organic at Holy Cow. Most campuses aren't lucky enough to have such a place. When waiting for the bus, skip the hot dog stand and hit the falafel pita stand instead. Your fork is your most powerful tool for change. How will you wield it?

Carrie Packwood Freeman is a PhD student in Journalism and Communication