Over the years God has blessed Focus on the Family with an ever-broadening reach via radio, Internet, mail, books and magazines. Soon we’ll be adding even newer technologies. With that expanding reach comes a growing list of issues that people want us to tackle, and they are all worthy and serious concerns: religious persecution, starvation, the environment, the tax burden, poverty, racism, immigration and war.

Our calling

Some people have become upset because we haven’t taken up particular causes, and they have suggested to the news media that our concerns are “narrow,” that we seem to worry only about two volatile topics: abortion and homosexuality.

So why do we focus on a few crucial issues rather than embracing all worthy causes and concerns?

First of all, our mission is to strengthen and nurture families and to spread the Gospel. When we address controversies, we don’t stray from this mission. Second, in reality, we don’t spend that much time talking about public policy issues. About 92 percent of our effort is devoted to building stronger marriages and equipping parents to raise children. The small remainder of our time is spent defending the family, in the halls of government and against the corrosive effects of culture. The news media pay attention only to that 8 percent because often it involves conflict and controversy.

About controversy: We don’t believe that the hot topics of abortion and homosexuality are narrow issues. Abortion kills preborn children—more than 43 million in the years since Roe v. Wade. That represents a tragedy so large it is hardly comprehensible, and it is difficult to understand how anyone can call this “narrow.” Abortion is a stain upon the nation, and thankfully (partially because of Dr. Dobson’s leadership) the American people are turning against abortion.

Earlier this year, for the first time the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the ban on partial birth abortion. That is the direct result of the people electing an openly pro-life president.

The second of those “narrow” issues strikes at the heart of the family. Homosexual activists are determined to erase the very definition of the family that has served civilization throughout history. The definition of family is, simply, a mom and a dad raising kids. Obviously there are many exceptions: single moms, single dads and even grandparents who heroically get the job done. For many reasons, there are also families without children.

Beyond our scope

Another question we get, most often from those who don’t understand our mission and core principles, is about poverty—since the Bible speaks often about the poor and the oppressed.

When considering those who are oppressed, one of the most haunting passages in Scripture is Matthew 25, in which Jesus states that one of the examples of genuine faith, which leads to the separation of “sheep” from “goats” at the end of the age, is how one treats “the least of these brethren.” Can anyone point to any class more oppressed than preborn children in this age of abortion? Absolutely not.

When it comes to preventing poverty, social science research clearly shows that an intact, two-parent home is a strong predictor of who will escape poverty.

David Ellwood, professor of public policy at Harvard University, has said it well: “The vast majority of children who are raised entirely in a two-parent home will never be poor during childhood.”

Author and broadcaster William Bennett once said that the nuclear family is the original and the best “Department of Health, Education and Welfare” that ever existed. His words have been proven true time and again. And that is why, when we address controversies, we stick to the issues that have a direct consequence for the family.

Tom Minnery is senior vice president of Government and Public Policy at Focus on the Family.
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Overwhelmingly, social science research underscores time and again the ancient wisdom of the Bible—that one man and one woman, joining together in a permanent union, is the best environment for raising healthy, productive children.

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Why we don’t address all the issues

by Tom Minnery

Over the years God has blessed Focus on the Family with an ever-broadening reach via radio, Internet, mail, books and magazines. Soon we’ll be adding even newer technologies. With that expanding reach comes a growing list of issues that people want us to tackle, and they are all worthy and serious concerns: religious persecution, starvation, the environment, the tax burden, poverty, racism, immigration and war.
Live your faith in front of your children

I have said on numerous occasions that parental values are “caught” rather than taught. While they need to hear their mothers and fathers talking the talk, children are even more likely to be affected by seeing their parents walking the walk. As important as it is for you to set aside time to read the Bible and pray with your kids on a daily basis, spiritual training is something that takes place during every waking moment. Your child is always watching you and listening carefully to what you say. He or she is vulnerable to what you believe and will inevitably hone in on those things about which you are passionate.

If you’re lukewarm about your relationship with God, your child is likely to adopt a similar attitude. When a crisis comes, and your first inclination is to panic rather than pray, your little ones will pick that up. If you tell your child that reaching out to others in the name of Jesus is important, but your life doesn’t show it, he or she will notice. In fact, your little ones are likely to be even less passionate about their faith than you are.

I’m not suggesting that your life has to take on an air of false piety. But it only stands to reason that if you will make the pursuit of God the ultimate priority in your life, that decision will inevitably make an impact on the precious children He has entrusted to your care. Why not make evangelism a lifestyle for your family? You don’t have to stand on the street corner with a “repent or perish” sign or force your kids to become professional preachers. But you should make every effort to live the Christian life boldly and intentionally and to share the love of Christ with the friends, extended family and other acquaintances within your circle of influence.

As your children see these spiritual disciplines earnestly and consistently put into practice, they are likely to conclude, If this is important to Mom and Dad, it must be important for me, too. The earlier in life you can help them embrace that perspective, the better chance they stand of becoming grounded, committed followers of Christ later on.

James C. Dobson, Ph.D.
Founder and Chairman