



## Magnifying Marriage:

Union professors address the future of marriage and society

The declining esteem with which many people hold marriage and the resulting effect on society is a tough issue to tackle in one discussion. So Union University faculty members hosted a workshop in Jackson that spanned three weeks and included contributions from four Union authors.

"There is no doubt that the traditional family, defined as one man and one woman in a covenantal lifelong relationship as the bedrock of civilization, is under assault in our contemporary culture," said Greg Thornbury, Dean of Christian Studies.

Thornbury, along with Union University President David S. Dockery and Christian studies faculty members David Gushee and Hal Poe spoke at First Baptist Church of Jackson about the future of marriage and society. A key theme: Churches must address this issue immediately and effectively.

Dockery began the workshop by describing the purposes of marriage and by giving a biblical and historical overview of the subject.

"Marriage is the most basic and significant social relationship among humankind," Dockery said. "This relationship must be nurtured and maintained for the welfare of all. Without marriage, the breakdown of society is inevitable."

Poe talked about the societal benefits of marriage, and pointed out that marriage is not a uniquely Christian invention. Other societies in places like China, India, Africa and South America have embraced marriage as well because of its benefits to the economy, health care, child welfare and education.

Strong, stable marriages are the best way to ensure that children become productive members of society, Poe said. But the counter-culture of the 1960s and its emphasis on

radical personal freedom have led to the decline of marriage, mainly because "successful marriage in any culture always requires the surrender of some personal freedom."

Thornbury discussed the current state of marriage, both in the United States and worldwide, a topic he said is depressing.

Various members of the cultural elite – media, politicians, academics and the judiciary – have rallied to attempt to change

### Dockery Joins Religious Leaders in Affirming Marriage

Union University President David S. Dockery was among 48 leaders in America's religious community who signed a letter affirming marriage.

"A Letter from America's Religious Leaders in Defense of Marriage" is intended as an ecumenical response to those who challenge and oppose traditional marriage.

In addition to Dockery, evangelical leaders such as Chuck Colson, Rick Warren and James Dobson signed the letter. Other signers included Francis Cardinal George, the archbishop of Chicago; Keith Ackerman, the Episcopal Bishop of Illinois; and Rabbi Tzvi Hersch Weinreb, Executive Vice President of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations in America.

Others are expected to join the original signers. ✦

the definition of what a family is, Thornbury said. Feminists and homosexual activists are attempting to do this through the courts, because they have realized the power of the judiciary to redefine law.

Thornbury cited examples from Europe to point where the United States

is headed if such activists are successful. In Russia, for example, there are now more abortions than live births – a development that is leading to a population implosion.

In France, Thornbury said the French people could be a minority in a couple of decades, because their low view of marriage has kept people from settling down and raising families. As a result, they will be outpaced by Muslims who do hold marriage and family in high regard.

"When you get rid of the institution altogether you have these unintended consequences that happen down the road," Thornbury said.

There are positive signs, however, according to Thornbury. He said that the church seems to have been reawakened on the issue, and he's encouraged by the rising popularity of covenant marriages.

"I believe if the church does what the church needs to do, it can revitalize and re-energize our culture," Thornbury said.

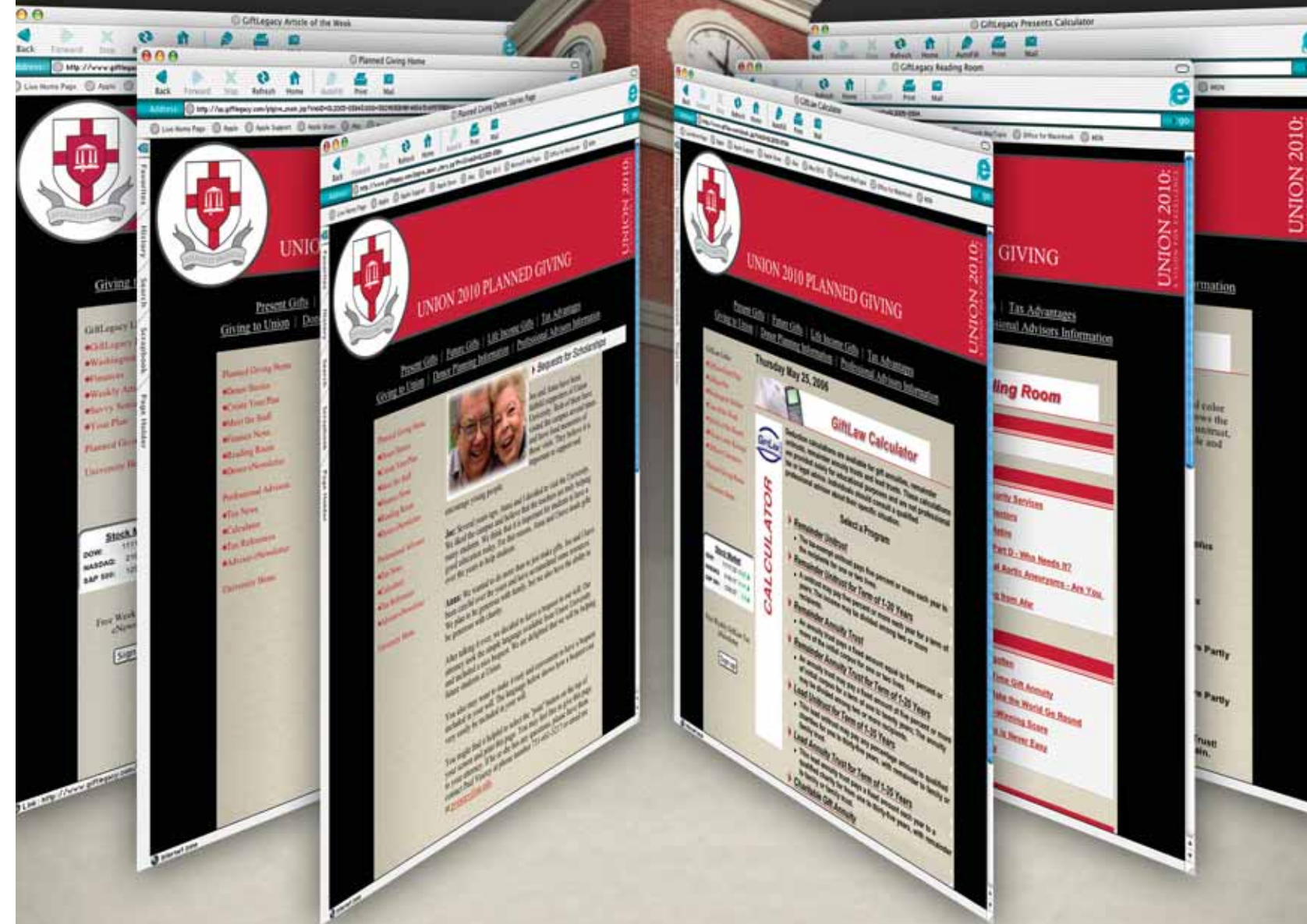
Gushee spoke about the future of marriage and society, and provided some steps churches can take to help reverse the trend of a weak view of marriage.

Among the proper responses for the church, Gushee said, is the faithful preaching and teaching of God's truth about marriage.

"We need to emphasize basic discipleship – that what it means to be a Christian is more than believing the right thing, more than having the right feelings and the right experiences, but being a committed follower of Jesus Christ in every area of our lives," he said.

He added that churches should establish appropriate ministries to youth, college students and singles that teach them about effective marriage. In addition the church needs to emphasize pre-marital counseling, minister effectively to those recovering from divorce and return to a biblical model of church discipline. ✦

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We're still happy to meet with you in person and help you make important planned giving decisions. Contact Paul S. Veazey, director of planned giving, at [pveazey@uu.edu](mailto:pveazey@uu.edu) or call (800) 338-6644 or (731) 661-5217.



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