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Should the Bible Be Removed from Public Schools under a Law Prohibiting Indecent Material?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about a public school library that wants to remove the Bible because of a state law prohibiting “pornographic or indecent material,” what to tell children who ask if art pieces that contain nude figures are inappropriate, and whether it’s inappropriate to pray in the shower or bathroom.

- * What argument should I make against a school library that claims a state law that prohibits “pornographic or indecent material” in public schools should be applied to the Bible because it contains descriptions of incest, prostitution, rape, and infanticide?
- * What should I tell my children when they ask if art pieces that contain nude figures are inappropriate?
- * Is it inappropriate to pray when you’re in the shower or bathroom?

Transcript

Welcome to the hashtag SDRask Podcast with Amy Hall and Greg Cogle. I'm Amy Hall and with me is Greg Cogle. Okay, Greg, we have some interesting questions today, kind of a little bit unusual.

The first one comes from Jeff. Recently a school library in Utah wants to ban the Bible because it contains descriptions of incest, prostitution, rape, and infanticide. And the state law prohibits, quote, pornographic or indecent materials in public school settings.

How do we formulate an argument against this? Well, there's two thoughts that come immediately to mind. The first one is if they're really concerned with that, there'll be a whole bunch of other things in the educational environment that would need to be changed. Okay.

Secondly, what pornography is classically characterized is that it appeals to the prurient interest. In other words, it is written to turn you on sexually or depict things that would

characteristically sexually excite somebody. All right.

So using that definition, there is nothing pornographic in the Bible because it has a reference to incest doesn't mean it's appealing to people in a, according to their prurient interest. I mean, there are laws on the books against incest. We don't call that pornography.

All right. So I guess it, I mean, that's where you find the issue of incest in the law. And then examples of it that's given where people do things that are wrong.

I can think of the one example after Sodom and Gomorrah, you have lots and lots, daughters, us to do see him. Okay. But it's a description of seduction and it only goes as far as to say they got him drunk and then had sex with him.

That's it. It doesn't give any detail that would be in any way sexually titillating. And so I guess my question would be of a person who raises this issue, what distinguishes sexual descriptions that are pornographic in your mind from sexual references that are not pornographic.

And this is where this detail about prurient interest comes in, but they may not think of those words, but it's pretty straightforward. You know, I think people understand the distinction. You have sex ed in school.

You know, the milder form that we had when I was in junior high, whatever, and then you have porn. They're completely different, even though both after a fashion make reference to sex or incest or whatever. So it's so odd, though, that public schools, a public school apparently would raise this concern to librarian when there is so much stuff in the library and more and more so nowadays that qualifies much more for sexually stimulating material and even in the educational system, whether teaching sex ed.

So I don't, you know, this it's an odd complaint in light of other things that are happening. But to go to the complaint proper, that would be the question I'd ask. Is there a difference between making reference to something sexual and being pornographic? If there is, what is the difference? How would you characterize it? And then hear from them? Because it seems to be anything that they're going to say that qualifies anything the Bible as pornographic is going to disqualify all kinds of other things that you find in the public school system too.

For once, Greg, I'm going to give a more cynical answer than you. I'm the cynic. I'm going to say, I'm going to tell you what I suspect is going on here.

And I think I think more needs to be looked into with this topic and find out why they're doing this. But my suspicion is that this is a protest against the law. So Utah passes a law that prohibits the pornographic or indecent materials, which we are seeing are in the schools.

I'm sure you've seen images from books. They're terrible. So Utah passes a law.

And then I think this is my suspicion. The library is saying, Oh, yeah, well, then guess we'll have to ban the Bible because the if that's the case, that's a great insight. That's just my suspicion.

Maybe it's totally innocent. But that's what I guess is happening. And I think in that case, you'd have to put the material side by side and say, all right, let's look at what at these two different categories.

Is there anything in the Bible that matches what they're trying to remove from schools? And I think everything you said applies to that, Greg. So either one of those, one of those, by the way, if push came to shove and that's the circumstance, what I would say is get rid of all that stuff and get rid of the Bible because students are going to be more likely to look at all that other stuff than they are to open a Bible and Bibles are available lots of places. Right.

If they ban the Bible and they say we are banning the Bible because it is pornographic and indecent, you will never have more kids reading the Bible after that. But I although be disappointed though because the characterization is false, but if that's the line of thinking, if you get rid of all this stuff, you'd have to get rid of the Bible. I said, okay, then get rid of the Bible and all of this stuff because that the trade-off is going to be benefit our communities.

I don't mean just benefit my moral system. It'll benefit our communities. Yeah, I agree with that, Greg.

I think if they are saying truly our community standards, I mean, and maybe it's just, okay, I remember being a small child and people reading specific passages in the Bible and like laughing, giggling about it, you know, there are things in the Song of Solomon and there are some things in the prophets and there, you know, there are a couple things. And if you don't want a kindergarten or reading Song of Solomon, okay, you don't have to have a Bible in the classroom. That's so true.

That's a habit though, because of the language that is being used, you know, that it takes an adult to figure out what the poetry is referring to anyway. You know, I think kids are going to go, oh, gross, because they're just sweethearts, you know. My daughters are the same way with Mom and Me, you know, oh, oh, oh, don't kiss, oh, gross, you know.

So anything is going to gross them out, but it's not because it's really obviously illicit. So, Greg, I think what you were saying about, you know, you'd have to get rid of all these other things. If they're going so far as to say we need to remove the Bible when it's a completely different level and a different type of thing, it's not promoting any immorality

or anything like that.

It's condemning all of that stuff. Yeah, then you could say, okay, well, then everything this side of the Bible has to be removed from your library. And as you said, that would be a lot of things.

It would be a lot of things. Okay. Now I'm going to go to a related question from Amy.

I have children ages 10, 8, and 5. We've discussed pornography with all of them. They are not embarrassed to ask us if something is inappropriate. I'm having a hard time with what my response should be in regard to art pieces to art like pieces from the Renaissance.

What are, do we appreciate and what should we not? Well, again, this I'm pausing here because I'm trying to figure out a distinction here that would make sense. First of all, I'm a little uncomfortable talking to a five-year-old about pornography. That itself, really? Part of our concern about the sex ed system is that children are being exposed to information before it's appropriate for them to do that, before they can emotionally handle it, even understand it.

I think there are different levels that you can bring into the conversation. Don't look at nudity if you come across that. And you're something like that.

I'm sure there are different levels you can talk about. Yeah. I just remember this.

You were right. And that's a good point. And so I'm not being critical of Amy necessarily.

But I do have this concern. And it's one that represents an objection to the kinds of things that are happening in schools now today with all the gender stuff and all the particulars. And they're giving sexual information that's not appropriate for the age.

And this is something that I recall from Corey Tenbooms. Hiding Place. The story there.

And she mentioned that when she was a young girl, she would travel on the train with her dad because he was a clockmaker and he'd have to synchronize his clocks with the clock in the big city that they'd go to. And then he could synchronize the clocks there in the town where they lived. And she was reading her Bible and there was a reference there to where she translated sex sin.

And she said, Papa, what is sex sin? And then he said, would you get that that Corey, would you get that heavy bagged down from the thing up there on the rack there, my bag? She said, I can't get that down dead Papa. That's too heavy for me. And he said, yes, that's right.

And this is too heavy for you too. And you're going to have to let Papa carry that until you can carry yourself. Now, there's a lot of wisdom in that.

And so I think that's part of my concern here. Okay. We see in art, the Rubens, for example, a classic example of that and also in Greek art too and statuary and stuff is a glorification of the human body.

Okay. And I think that this is, that's why you see these statues of nudes, etc. And even David is nude.

Okay. The famous statue of David, he's nude. And what is attempting to do is to represent the image of the human body in its beauty, not in its sexuality.

Now, of course, people could look at Rubens and say, well, that's hot or whatever, you know, if they like that kind of thing. But that's not the purpose of that. And this is where a person has to make an individual decision.

Okay. But the purpose of it was not to appeal to the prurient interest, not to get people turned on, but it was to glorify and the human image and characterize it in a beautiful way. And so I think it's going to be, that's the explanation.

It's like you can go to an anatomy book and see anatomy, you know, stuff. And there you have sexual organs and some of them are exposed for the sake of explaining the anatomy. The purpose is different.

It might be, it might be a difficult, it's hard to know for question is how she should talk to them about that distinction or how she should think about it herself. Because it would be difficult to make that distinction to the five year old. If your explanation is we don't look at naked people, that's that's private.

That's going to be a little bit more difficult to explain. In that case, maybe it would just be a situation where you say, well, well, you know, when we're older, we'll, I don't know. I don't know.

I'm not sure how. Well, that's the difficulty with the younger child, you know, and this is where maybe a distinction can be made for the older kids, but the younger child is not going to understand. Although I have never seen a child be disgusted by art in a museum, like turn away and be be horrified and disturbed, whereas I do hear stories about children coming across pornography and being very disturbed.

I think even they know the difference. It might you might just not be able to explain to them what the difference is. And also it's another thing that makes it difficult is clothing is a sign of dignity in the Bible, even in heaven, we will be clothed.

And the times when people are ashamed or they're or they're punished or talks about revealing their nakedness because not because the human body is bad, but just because as humans now in dignity, we are clothed. Those, you know, Paul talks about how the parts that have less dignity, we take better care of and, you know, he talks about that.

So there is a, there is a, an appropriateness to being clothed.

So that would be maybe something to think about here. I don't know. I don't know if that would be a reason not to see the human body or to look at the beauty of God's creation, but maybe with a very small child, if you can't explain the difference, maybe just don't go see those things.

And then you can, you know, and by the way, when you have a society that is deeply eroticized, people are going to look even at things that are kind of neutral in themselves. And they're going to, you know, take erotic delight at it, because that's the way their society is, is encouraging them to think. Mm hmm.

That's true, Greg. I hadn't thought of that. Anyway, hopefully that helps, Amy.

I don't, I don't know. It's probably something I should think more about since I don't have children. I haven't had to really think about that.

But here's another question along all these same lines, Greg. This one comes from Liz. Is it inappropriate to pray when you are in the shower or bathroom? I have four kids, and this seems to be the most quiet and reflective time I have during the day.

I keep finding myself thinking of people and wanting to pray, but then forget to later pray in the chaos of the day. Why would it be inappropriate? That's my question. I'm not sure you understand the concern.

I would say if, okay, I'll give you my answer to this, and then you can respond after what I say. It has never occurred to me that there's any sort of indignity with being in the shower at all. Simply being naked in your own private place, that doesn't strike me as being any sort of I can't think of the word I'm trying to think of.

In propriety. Yeah, yeah. But I would say, let's say you're on the toilet and that's something I don't read the Bible or pray on the toilet as a general rule because it is something I just want to keep separate, not because, again, there's nothing immoral about it.

It's the way God created us. But there is, I do want to make a distinction between kind of the, I don't want to say indignity, but the more coarse habits. Yeah.

Yeah. Right. I don't want to combine the two.

I don't want to combine the two. And so I would not do that on the toilet for that reason. However, I would not make this a hard and fast rule either.

Let's say you are, let's say you're undergoing cancer treatment and you're, you're constantly throwing up and you're on the toilet or you're sick and there's an I wouldn't say you can't pray. I wouldn't say that you can never pray there. I would just say as a

general rule, I do separate those two things.

Okay. It's weird that I've actually thought about this before. Well, I'll say for myself, I, I've prayed in both circumstances and I'm more of the sense that if something, I'm thinking about something that needs to be prayed about, for whatever reason, I'll pray.

I'll just take care of it. I'll let get her done. You know, let's, let's just, I don't want this thing to be like, oh, this is part of my to do later because my, I don't consider my own prayer life to be that robust.

And so I don't want to miss an opportunity. If somebody says, well, you pray about such and so, and I said, yeah, I will. Then when I say goodbye to them, odd feeling in some circumstances that seem to be less elegant to talking to God during those times.

And I think it's a personal matter, you know, but I'll just say for myself, I'm probably less likely to pray on the toilet, but no problem at all in a shower. But there have been times when things have come up in my mind or I'm reading something or whatever, I just anguished about something and I talked to the Lord about it. A lot of my own prayer is very spontaneous conversational.

I don't, I have prayer times, but I also have, I don't go into a period of prayer oftentimes when I'm praying. I just start talking to God as if he were there with me and my companion. I've actually written about this a little bit.

I think the August mentoring letter talks about this that, and this is some way to, a way that I help increase my sense of intimacy with God ongoing to help that sense of awareness, some people, I say them connecting the mind to the heart. But this quorum day, which means before the Lord that every moment I'm before the Lord and he's there and I could just turn to him just like I could turn to you and talk to you when you're with me. So, and irrespective of the location or the activity.

Oh, I guess my final thing would just be if you feel like you're being irreverent and it's bothering you, then just don't do it. It's, it's, that's okay. But, and I, and I wonder if you're asking the question if it is bothering you.

So I, you know, I, I agree, Greg, I think maybe, you know, just think through what your thoughts are on this, what your conscience is. And again, I don't think this is a moral issue. It's just a matter of what we were discussing here.

So, and that's it, Greg. I think we're out of time. But thank you for your questions.

If you have a question, send it on Twitter with the hashtag STRask or you can send it through our website. Just go to our hashtag STRask podcast page and you'll find a link there. You can send us a very short question.

Just keep it to a couple of sentences and we will consider it for the show. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cogle for Stand to Reason.