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How Should I Respond to Someone Who Feels Invalidated by the Christian View of Sexuality?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to respond to someone who says, “But this is who I am,” and who feels their existence is being invalidated by the Christian view of sexuality and whether Paul was wrong to encourage Christians to remain unmarried because “the time was short.”

* How would you respond to someone who says, “But this is who I am,” and who feels like you’re invalidating their existence when you explain the Christian view on gender, sexuality and lifestyles?

* Considering how long it’s been since Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, was he right to say the time was short and to encourage Christians to remain single rather than get married and build Christian families over the centuries?

Transcript

I'm Amy Hall, I'm here with Greg Koukl. Thanks for joining us for Stanterasons #STRask podcast. Greg, you're ready for first question.

Well, I'll say it. All right, this one comes from “to simply name. Name? Name, that's all.

Okay. Okay. What's a good approach to the common response, but this is who I am when it comes to gender, sexuality, and lifestyles.

Once someone felt like I was invalidating her person and existence when I gently shared my perspective, the argument made me look very bad to others. Well, the “right. Sometimes it paused because I think that the rhetorical environment is very, very difficult.

Okay. The rhetorical environment is very difficult. And I'm not sure if this was a gender issue or what it was.

The appeal that is being made there is an appeal that is "it's a dualistic appeal. It's a sense of identity. Okay.

This is who I am. And added to that a commitment to authenticity. Okay.

And this goes back to details and kind of a characterization or an explanation of how we got where we're at called the rise in triumph of the modern self by " you know, the "trumen. I get Carson in my head. I can't remember if that's his first name or last name.

I think it's Carl. Oh, it's Carl Truman. Okay.

Yeah. Plus the last name is spelled T-R-U-E-M-A-N. True man.

And I don't know. I just for some reason that just confused me how to remember. But the point he's making is that we have gotten to the point where the thing that is most important is expressive individualism in people's lives.

Okay. I am who I am, who I determine, I am whatever it is. And then that becomes my identity at the moment.

And in order for me to be an authentic human being, I need to own that, which I think I am at the moment. And if I am going to be included, this is inclusion, included in the human community, you need to affirm what I authentically believe my identity is. All right.

And this is why if you don't affirm it, but find fault with it, then you are denying their identity. You are disallowing them from being authentically themselves. And you are excluding them from the community, which is why people are going to look down on you and then you look bad to the rest of the world.

All of that is going on under the surface. That's the whole dynamic. Would you agree with that, Amy? Yeah, I think that's a good characterization of what's going on here.

And so that's what you're up against. Now, when somebody says, well, that's who I am, this is where the tactical game plan is so helpful because I can see how everybody who is in a situation where name finds himself. And by the way, it's interesting that now I'm thinking this is an anonymous person.

It is not unusual when people raise questions about sexuality and gender identity, etc., that they don't identify themselves. And in this case, it's a person who is concerned about engaging other people. This isn't a person who's struggling themselves.

Like, I know a friend that helped me out with that kind of thing. But my instinct here is that they are nervous about being identified, even on a show like this. In fact, we have callers on the other show who do the same thing, which I respect entirely, but I've just noticed the dynamic here.

And if this whole thing is all about being authentic, why isn't that the Christian can't be authentically Christian and is not included? See, this just goes to show this is a one-way street, authenticity and inclusion and tolerance and all of that. Okay. But I want to go back to the point I was making a moment ago about the tactical game plan because it is not unusual to be stuck with, to be confronted with something and feel flat-footed.

All right? So now what? This is where your first question comes in. I'm confused. What do you mean by that is the formal question and some form of that is what we're going to use.

So when somebody says you're denying my identity, how am I doing that? You're denying that to me. Now, when you say, how am I doing that or I explain to me what you mean by that or not how am I doing that? Because that invites another accusation. Explain to me what you mean by that.

That buys you time. The pressures offer you immediately. When they say offer that accusation, everybody's looking at you and then now what? Now you've got to come up with the clever thing.

Even if you don't come up with the clever thing, you look like the bad guy. And even if you had the clever thing, you'd probably still look like the bad guy. You have no room to move there.

But if you ask, I'm making an out, sorry, if you ask the question, I'm not sure what you mean. And then make them explain it. Okay, now the ball's in their court, which means the pressure for the moment is off of you and they're going to give you more things to work with and potentially help you out.

Well this is who I am. I'm kind of role playing the other side. No, what do you mean? It means this is who I am.

You mean, I'm not sure. You have, let's say it's gender. It's a gender dysphoria.

You have a man's body. I know, but I'm really a woman. Okay, so what you mean is you think you're a woman, in your mind you're a woman, but your body you're a man.

Is that correct? Okay, so then why isn't your identity half and half? Now all I'm doing here, all I'm doing here is buying some time and also trying to get them to question or to show that there's confusion here. Okay, I'm being accused of doing something bad, but okay, well there's confusion here. So how is your, how was your, and by the way, how is your identity in your, your gender in the moment as opposed to something else? Why isn't your identity as a human being or I don't know? So are you saying then that if I don't accept your view of yourself, that I'm somehow denigrating you as a human being? Yes.

Well I certainly don't mean to be denigrating you as a human being. But do you, and I'm sorry you feel that way because that's not my attitude at all. All right, I value you as a human being, but I want to ask you a question.

Do you think that same attitude should be extended to everybody? Yes, of course. Okay, then why aren't you extending it to me right now? What do you mean? I'm a Christian. My understanding of the world is that God made sex binary.

So that's my identity. Should I be authentically myself? And if I'm authentically myself, will you include me in your community? Now what we're doing here is we're playing, we're playing their rules against them. I think that the whole idea that they express that this is my identity, et cetera, is confused because strictly speaking, their body says one thing and their mind says another.

And the question is, well, which one's correct? They want to say their mind, but it seems to me obviously their body is nothing wrong with their body. Something's wrong with their mind. Now you may not be able to have that conversation at the time, but the tactical approach there with these questions allows you, it buys you time, it gets you, it gets more information out on the table as it were and it gives you an opportunity to maneuver a little bit and maybe help other people see that this isn't just a simple example of a bigot not dehumanizing somebody else because it's not that at all.

But that's the way the rhetoric works. That's the way we are made to sound. But even if all you do is ask for clarification, that question buys you more time to think about how you can maneuver and about maybe what would be wrong.

And then as they're giving clarification, then you now you have some content to ask more questions about and maybe in the process show that you're not the one who's confused. The other person is confused and that doesn't mean we should be mean to them. But look at if there's a certain set of rules here that I'm supposed to play by, why isn't everybody supposed to play about those same rules? Why can't you just say, okay, well, I disagree with you.

Christian, this is my identity. You're denying what I think is true, but I think it's true. So I don't know why I should feel bad about you not liking it.

But you have your right to your own view too. And I respect your identity as well. And I don't expect you to feel bad because I think that's the other side, by the way.

Notice who's the real defensive person in these conversations? It's the other side in these circumstances is so utterly defensive because they're being disagreed with. And I remember a long ago on the radio how I read an article or a section of article by a homosexual saying, why are we so thin skinned? What why so people don't agree with us? So what? We don't agree with them. Why do we have to make such a big fuss about

it? Okay.

Well, people are committing suicide because you disagree really? There's a lot more disagreement with Christians and Christians are not committing suicide because people disagree with them. Something else is going on here. You know, anyway, so I hope that gives a little bit of structure to a way to maneuver.

And it's hard to say, here's the blow by blow in a conversation. But that's how to start. And these are the things to look for.

The idea that it's confusing to say, this is my identity. Okay. Even if it's something sexual, they're gay.

This is my identity. Why are you? Why would you build your whole identity around your sexual desires? Is this the only thing that you're like you are about so that this is your identity? I don't know who I got that from. I think I got a Christopher Uon, but that idea.

But that seems a little odd. I don't build my whole identity around my sexual tastes. Think of when people lose their sexual tastes when they get older, for example, or whatever.

Does that mean that they're no longer themselves? It's just odd in any event. That's what you want to do is try to have a friendly conversation and treat the other individual in a gracious manner. But always ask the question, do you think that's the way everybody should be treated? Yes.

Well, then why aren't you treating me this way? Now, that's the suicide tactic because it's a turnabout, but it's a fair one. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. This is such a difficult topic to discuss with people because there are such basic ideas that are different and they don't know you have different ideas.

So people who think that they, what you describe, Greg, about expressive individualism and authenticity, who have that view rather than the view that we are fallen and we are supposed to conform ourselves to an objective truth outside of ourselves. Both those things, fallenness, the idea that we, there are things we need to change about ourselves and the idea that we need to change ourselves according to an outside standard. Those ideas are so different and they don't know that that's what you think.

So when you say that there's something wrong with homosexuality, they have no idea where you're coming from. And I don't know how, because here's the other problem, Greg. If you try to explain that to them, their first thought is going to be, this is a power play to maintain your supremacy.

That's all this is. It doesn't really mean anything. They've been taught to think that way.

This is the way the narrative works. So even if you try to explain, and I think some of this depends on how well you know the person. If you know the person really well, you'll probably get farther in the conversation because they already have some interactions with you, they know who you are.

You can point to that and say, hey, do you know me to be a mean person? Maybe you should listen to where I'm coming from because I don't think it's where you think I'm coming from. And we have to pray and we still have to speak the truth. But I think we also need to recognize that this is, you may not be able to communicate this to them.

And one thing I think of is, again, first Peter, one thing that Peter says, because his whole thing here, he says this over and over, is that we are to act in a way that reflects God well. No matter how that treats us, whether that makes a difference in their life or it doesn't make a difference in their life and they hate us for it. But here's something he says in chapter two, verse starting in verse 12, keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles so that in the thing in which they slander you as evil doers, they may because of your good deeds as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

So the idea there is that you might actually reach them. And he talks about this again when he talks about women winning their wives over to the gospel through their. Oh, sorry.

Thank you, Greg. Boy, see the power of the culture penetrating women winning their wives, winning their husbands over without a word by their behavior. Now it also talks about behavior, your good behavior, putting people to shame.

So it also talks about your behavior will actually serve in their judgment, but it could also serve for their salvation. So at the very end, if nothing works, if you cannot communicate your ideas to them, at least what you can do is continue to honor God, glorify God with your behavior to do what is right to treat them with dignity. And Greg, I love what you said about explaining that explicitly to them.

I value you as a human being. In no way intend to say that you're less as a human being because that's not how I measure human beings. And in fact, I think every single human being has things about them that they need to change, not just you.

This isn't just a problem with you. This is actually my entire worldview about who we are as human beings. You know, Amy, sandwiched between those two segments of 2 Peter, chapter 2, in the beginning of chapter 3, the end of chapter 2, it also talks about bearing up when you do good, bearing up under unjust treatment.

And he says, when you bear this, when you bear up, graciously, however it puts it, this finds favor with God. It actually says that twice in use is Jesus as an example who when reviled did not revile in return and then who when threatened did not return threats, but

kept entrusting himself to him who judges righteously. So in the process here, there's going to be persecution when you're always careful to say, don't do something stupid.

So if that happens, yeah, and actually in chapter 4, it says the same thing. You don't do something stupid and suffer for being a knut with. Then you're getting what you deserve.

Even if you bear up underneath that, well, so what? But if you do what's right and you are mistreated and you bear up, then this finds favor with God. I love this. I've been focusing on this passage quite a bit lately and I love the passage because it allows me to think, okay, this is hard for me to do.

But if I do this, God is going to be smiling at me. Good. Good job.

That's good, Greg. Okay, that's good. I know it's hard, but the deal with you're doing is good.

Hang in there. And that kind of encourages me through the particular hardship I'm facing. If there's one book for our time right now, it's First Peter.

I agree. I recommend everybody just keep reading that book. I mean, other than tactics and other than story of reality, but those are second and third, the same.

Well, I was going to say, yes, I love Romans. You know I love Romans. Right now, First Peter is so relevant.

It's unbelievably relevant. Well, let's let's throw another one in here right now, Greg. This one comes from Camille Turner.

First Corinthians 7, 25 through 40, Paul says it's better not to marry because the time is short. Based on the numerous years that have passed, was this an inaccurate assessment? Wouldn't it have been best to be building Christian families through the years? Yeah, I can't answer that. I mean, I wish I could.

There are a number of references. And I'm thinking when I was maybe in First Peter, I'm not sure where, but I was just reading recently that the time is at hand, the time is short. We are closer to salvation than we were before.

Well, that's of course a, what do you call it? It's like, that's true by definition. You know, every minute you're closer, even if it's a thousand or a million years away, but it seems to suggest that it's close yet it's two thousand years ago. So I don't know what to think of that, to be honest with you.

And maybe ask some ideas, Amy, but I don't know. I mean, obviously, what could it could have to do with that particular situation too, but because of where they were right then, what was going on right then, it was better not to marry. In persecution, what they're facing, I don't know.

But I think it's also true that Paul understood that it was that there are few people who won't marry. It's not that by saying this, he was suddenly going to end all of Christian families. He already had explained that for because that we are sexual beings that most people will get married, and that's part of how God created us and how he wants us to express that.

And that's fine. And that's fine. He says, right.

Right. But it is true that if you're not married, you certainly do have a lot more time and attention that you can spend serving God specifically. So for the people who could accept that, then that would be better.

But he also understood that that was not going to be a widespread thing. But another thing that's interesting about this passage, it's the longest passage in the Bible, certainly in the New Testament, where it talks about marriage and the decision to get married. And what's very interesting about this long passage is Paul never suggests that ask God and see what God tells you in so many words.

Should you get married or not? Well, you better ask God. Who should you marry? You better find out from God and you might get the wrong one. This is theology that comes on the lips of many people that is completely absent from the New Testament.

It's not there. And if it were to be there, this is the place it would be. What people do is they go back oftentimes 4,000 years to Abraham when Abraham sends his servant out and finds a wife for his son.

And if you want to go back 4,000 years to get that model and stick with the model, that's a parent choosing a spouse for their children. That isn't the Holy Spirit. You know, and that's they want to spiritualize it in that way.

No, Paul gives directions here about marriage and he says there's pros and cons to be married. And there's pros and cons to being single. There are also moral obligations to be married and there's moral obligations to being single.

All right? So get it clear and then you make a decision. Here's what I think. I think you'd be happier if you did this, but notice happiness is a factor in there, but within that framework, but he never suggests anything like wait to hear from God on this issue at all.

And there have been all kinds of people who made all kinds of foolish decisions because they felt leading of God to marry a particular person. Sometimes it works out. Sometimes it doesn't.

Anyway, I just thought I'd throw that in. No extra charge. Well, and just to sum up this question, I think we have been building Christian families throughout the years.

So that didn't change that. And one last thing, it just occurred to me that the time is short for every person, the time is short too. For me, my time is short.

For you, your time is short. It's short on this earth. We have a limited amount of time and we just need to decide how we're going to use that.

So hopefully that helps. You know, maybe that's interesting. It's obviously a correct observation, but now I'm thinking about it.

It might be exactly what Paul had in mind there. He also said in Ephesians chapter five, make the most of your time because the days are evil. Okay, make the most of your time.

Don't sit around waiting for God to tell you something to do. There's an application again of that. Get little, get going, get working, get moving, get doing the things you already got marching orders.

It's right there in the text all over. So get on with it because time is short. Well done.

Well, thank you, Greg. Thank you, Camille. Thank you, name.

We appreciate hearing from you. Send us your questions on Twitter with the hashtag #STRask or you can go through our website. Just go to our contact page, choose.

I have another question and make sure you include #STRask, all one word, somewhere in your question. And if you do that, it will come straight to my question file and I'll consider your question. And I do keep them.

I go back and I go back months and I look through again to see if there's something I missed. And so just know, I will see your question. I promise you if you send it in.

And we'd love to hear from you. It makes our show better than more questions we have to choose from. So we'd love to have you contribute.

This is Amy Hall and Greg Cockel for Stand to Reason.

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