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If Christianity Had a Goddess to Worship, I Might Consider It

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to respond to someone who says she would only consider Christianity if it weren't patriarchal and had a goddess to worship and how a husband could persuade his wife, who is extremely pro-choice due to significant trauma, to see the truth of pro-life arguments.

* How should one respond to someone's assertion that she would only consider Christianity if it weren't patriarchal and had a goddess for her to worship?

* How can I persuade my wife to be pro-life when she's extremely pro-choice due to significant trauma?

Transcript

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It's so funny. All right. I don't know how that happens, but that's how it is.

All right. Here's a question from Molly Stevens. How should one respond to an assertion that Christianity is patriarchal? And if only there was a goddess to worship, she might consider it.

Oh, you know, I, the reason I'm chuckling is because this person is not going to be pleased with the answer. I don't mean Molly. I mean the person.

Well, if only God would this way, the way I like it, the way I want it, then I could go with it. Okay. It doesn't matter how a person wants reality to be.

What matters is what reality is. Okay. Now there may be some value in clarifying the patriarchal element.

God identifies himself as a father. Now he's not a man. And it's clear when you look in passages describing God that he has kind of characteristics that classically can be identified as male and female.

Now nowadays, it's even dangerous to make that statement because that implies that many women are kind of different and a lot of people don't even like that. But for those of you who can see the world as it actually is, which is most of you, many women are different. No duh.

And evil are different. I mean, that's the, that's a good thing. It also creates difficulties.

Whatever, given that God identifies himself as a father, that's his word for himself, even though he's a warrior God. That's pretty obvious. And he's like a hen who gathers chicks under his wings and spreads his wings for protection.

That's in the Psalm. Psalm somewhere, maybe 90, 91, something like that. So there are ways that the God is described that entailed both classical male and classical female characteristics.

And in fact, some have argued that the image of God in man that is in humans is properly expressed in both male and female understood together. Okay. Because God's characteristics of God's personality, so to speak, are captured uniquely in each of the genders or the sexes.

So when God is a God is a father, oh, that's patriarchal, but he's not a man. However, there's no question that the system that God set up, and this is controversial with some people, but I honestly do not see scripturally why this is so. Culturally, yes, scripturally, no.

The world that God set up and the way things are in the Bible is a patriarchy. There are fathers who have wives and give birth to children and who have sons. And the father is the head of the household.

And this is not just some accident of ancient history. And we know better now it's also repeated in the New Testament. Now there are patterns of submission that we see in the New Testament, but there's no question that there is a hierarchy of role, not value in the

New Testament.

So that could be pejoratively characterized as patriarchy. But I don't know here, it's standard reason. We got lots of wonderful workers, and then we have an executive staff that makes decisions.

And then we have one guy at the top of it that the buck stops with him. And that's me. And most of the time, everybody does their job fine.

Other times, you know, we got to get together and talk about things. And sometimes we count the votes and sometimes we weigh the votes. And my vote has the most weight.

But that doesn't create a problem here. That is the only way an organization can be run. And it's the only way a family could be run.

You can't, it's not a democracy. You don't say, okay, mom decides one thing, dad wants something else. So the kids break the tie.

It's not the way it works. There is a head, and the head has the responsibility. So I am unabashedly, I unabashedly affirm the patriarchal elements as I've described and qualified them in the Bible.

And that God is a father. That is the way he's chosen to describe himself. Now, my take is that's the way the world actually is.

Can on the human side, those things be abused? Absolutely. Anybody can abuse any system because human beings are fallen. Just because it can be abused doesn't mean that it's, it's, it's, it's not a good plan where it's not the plan that God's established.

So when it comes to somebody who says, gee, if God were a woman, I could be, I'd feel more comfortable. My response is, God's not a woman. I'm sorry.

So that's God. He's not a man either, but he's characterized as a father and he's created and he's established an order in certain organization enterprises, like family or work or government in that order. There's a hierarchy and that's the way that now if you don't like that, I don't like it all the time either.

It doesn't change what's actually so. Incidentally, on a personal note, there's a little parallel here. I'm supposed to be in love with Jesus.

Jesus is a guy. I think it's a lot easier for women to be in love with Jesus than it is for men to be in love with Jesus. You know, but I can't change that.

I think I wish Jesus was a really beautiful woman and then I could really connect with snuggling up with him and holding him and him holding me. Okay, wait, hold on a second because I think we're, I think you're called to love him. I think in love is a

different thing.

I know, but all I'm saying, you know, I'm not trying to over-centralize this. I'm joking a little bit hyperbolically here, but the point I'm making is, yeah, it is more difficult because my experience of emotional love is much more powerful towards a woman than it is towards men. I have men I love.

They're on our team. But it's just not the same. All I'm saying is, we have a male Messiah.

Okay, the son of God is incarnated in a male. Okay. And that creates, and I don't think I'm alone, some liabilities for connecting emotionally with him.

All right, maybe some don't have whatever. But I can't change the fact that Jesus is a male human being. The son of God is a male human being.

That's reality. And so this, I got to work within my own, you know, discomforts about that and try to forge a relationship that's meaningful. I just say that's a little stumbling block.

But so just like God being a father might be a stumbling block for this other gal. There's many virtues in it. And so the big thing is the reality is what it is.

Yes. So along those lines, Greg, I have a point about what I think is going on behind this. And then I have a couple points about how you might proceed if you're talking to someone who's making this claim.

First, I think there are two cultural ideas that are lurking behind this statement. And one you've already mentioned, Greg, and that is the view of religion that we have is that it's what it's whatever we like. We should just choose something we like and whatever we believe.

It doesn't matter what we believe. It only matters that we're sincere. There's not this understanding that there is a spiritual reality that we're supposed to conform ourselves to.

That's a completely foreign idea to most of our culture. So already from this question, we can see this is her view of religion. You know, if it weren't patriarchal, then if we're a goddess, then I would consider it.

You can tell she's not thinking in terms of reality. She's not thinking in terms of truth. That's just completely outside of her understanding.

So there's your first entry point, if you're talking to someone about this, where you could say, okay, so why does what you like make a difference? Is that your understanding of how religion works? So there's a way in where you can start planning the idea that we are making a claim about reality, not a claim about what we like or a claim about what

makes us feel good or whatever it is. It's actually how the book, the story of reality starts by saying that Christianity is a picture of reality. We mean to describe the way the world actually is, not the way people want to make it out to be.

And it's the second that is the trend, not the first when it comes to religion. So that's the first cultural idea, I think is behind this. The second one I think is behind this is the idea of identity being all important.

I think what she has in mind here is that a man can't represent me. What do I have to do with a man? I need a woman to be the person I work, or at least the feminine to be what I worship because I am a woman and that's what's important to me. So there's this kind of being collapsed into a category of your identity and your group that you can't get out of.

So there might be something you can say there in terms of interacting with men and why does she feel like this is the case? I don't have as many ideas for that one, but I think this idea of identity is definitely part of this. It's a great insight and both of these kind of reflect the current ethos. It's the way people think nowadays.

I think Natasha Crane's book, for example, Faithfully Different, she talks about feelings, our driving things. Happiness is what really matters. And of course we see these kind of identity categories that are part of culture that justify people pursuing which is often destructive behavior because they take this as authentically reflecting "who" they really are.

So this is part of the problem we're running into here. So now I have a couple ideas of how, of more questions you can ask. And the first one to ask is, what do you mean by patriarchal? What do you mean by that? Where'd you get that question? Because what does she mean by that? Christianity is patriarchal.

Well, my guess is she's going to have some ideas that are not Christianity. So here's an example where here's an approach you can take where you can actually correct maybe some ideas that she has of Christianity. Now it could be that some of what she means by patriarchal is the idea that there are standards that we don't get to make up, that you have to conform yourself to.

There's an authority, in other words. There's an authority. And this is something I think is not as native an idea to women because women tend to want to make people feel good and be peacemakers and all those sorts of things and adjust standards in order to make other people feel better to nurture them.

Whereas men tend to uphold the standards. So maybe that's part of what she's thinking about here. And that is true.

That is part of Christianity. There's a reality and there's a standard that we conform

ourselves to. And that might be what she's reacting against.

But you don't know what she's reacting against until she tells you because patriarchy is a word that's used to mean all sorts of things. And then finally, and I think this might be the most important thing to do. As you're asking her about patriarchy, I think it's important to explain just what Christianity teaches about men and women.

And it's in a very simple way. And that is this. Christ is the model for how men are to treat women and their wives in particular.

And this is specifically in the Bible where the idea that the man is supposed to love his wife as Christ loved the church. And that's in Ephesians. Ephesians 5. Wait, you should have this memorized.

I know where that is. So this is something you can bring to attention and say, you know, you might not realize this. But the whole idea of Christianity is that the person in power came and died to serve the person he was over.

So even if you're responsible for it. Yes, responsible for it. So even if you're talking about, and by the way, just interrupt, that's a whole big part of it.

It isn't just being over. It is taking responsibility for and caring for in the same passage, loving the man, loving the woman the way he loves his own body. And he cares for his own body.

He's got to care for his wife as well. So these are all things to point out because, you know, Jesus makes the whole point. The Gentiles, they they lord it over the people.

They're over. And so that's the view of power many non-Christians have. So when you're talking about say the the husband having the power or the the father God having the power, what people hear is, Oh, he's lording it over them.

But that is the opposite of what Jesus said. So here's an opportunity for you to say, Hey, do you know what Jesus had to say about power? This is what he had to say. He washed his disciples feet.

The text actually says, knowing that he came from God and was going back to God, he washed their feet. That means as an expression of his power was service. And of course, the cross is the biggest example of that.

The person in power is the person who served. The greatest among you is the one who serves. The husband is supposed to love his wife the way Christ loved the church.

And how did he love the church? He died for her to save her. And so this idea of power, this is such a radical idea. And this really affected the way in the entire West views a lot of things.

But but some people don't hear that when they hear there's a father God. So here's an example for you to say, Hey, let me just tell you about what Jesus did on the cross because I think this might change your view of what I mean when I say there's a father God. Let me add a qualifier just so there's no misunderstanding.

This is not an abrogation of power. It is a proper way that power is to be used. Jesus washed the disciples feet, but he was still the Lord.

He was still in a certain sense over them. Now husbands are responsible for wives, but the way they end to care for them, but the way they're responsible and caring for them is serving them by leading them. So it's going to be the case that a loving husband isn't one that just does whatever his wife or children want them to do.

And that's servitude. It he has to decide before the Lord and the circumstances, what is the best healthiest and appropriate way, pardon me, to to love his wife and his children. So there's this kind of interesting and actually for men very challenging balance.

How do you lead? And that is be the head that buck stops there. The husband has veto power, but to exercise in that in a way that it's not just raw power and autocracy, but it's this power and position of responsibility and authority that is being used in a gracious loving way. The way Jesus was Lord and still was willing to lay his life down for his disciples and for us.

That makes sense? Yeah, so there are two ideas for you, Molly. Number one, helper to understand that the claim we're making is one of truth and reality and that we have an obligation to conform ourselves to truth and to believe the truth, just like we would have an obligation in the world around us to recognize the truth because the truth will get us in some way, we ignore it. And then secondly, to talk about who Christ is and what he did on the cross and how that is the central aspect of Christianity, not some idea of an angry punishing judge.

That's not at the center of Christianity. Yes, God is a judge. That is true, but that's not the center of Christianity.

And also he judges, when he does, he judges justly and righteously. Right. Okay, Greg, let's squeeze one more question in here.

Hmm, I'm trying to think what won't take too long, but that's a, that's not the right question to ask because somehow we make everything take. Yeah, that's right. Well, let's, let's stay with an idea that one that involves a husband-wife relationship.

Okay. This one comes from Dustin. I am pro-life.

My wife is extremely pro-choice due to significant trauma. She refuses to acknowledge what the Bible says about abortion or see pro-life arguments. What should I do? How can

I persuade her of the truth? Well, if she's not interested in what the Bible says and she is not persuaded by pro-life arguments, and I presume that you have availed yourself of good ones.

And by the way, just for the record, there's a fella. Who's the guy who does the human rights argument? I've got it. I just was working on it in the book.

Josh Brahm? Yeah, Josh Brahm. You may want to look at what Josh Brahm does because there's another wrinkle to the pro-life position that has turned out to be very powerful with a lot of people. However, in your case, it seems like your wife has not rationally indisposed to the pro-life view.

She is emotionally indisposed to the pro-life view. That's a different animal. And having done everything, you still may not be able to persuade your wife.

Okay? I don't think there's anything more you can do at this point. Except, I mean, if you're, because you can't control other human beings what they believe, period. And hopefully, the issue will not come up in a practical manner with your wife with an unwanted pregnancy or with others under her influence.

And so that she will pursue an abortion if that's what she wants against your will, which would be really a problem, or is promoting the pro-choice view, maybe with your children or with others. And this is where I think it certainly would be appropriate for you to tell your wife as a leader in your family. And you're going to have to navigate this carefully, but this is not something we're going to teach our children.

I respect your view. You have your view, and I respect that that's your view. I think it's wrong, your pro-choice view, for the reason I've given, but we cannot teach this to our children.

I don't know if that's the kind of circumstance you're facing right now, Dustin. But that will, I think, what you've asked is I've given all the reasons she won't change your mind for emotional reasons. Okay, that's kind of reality for you.

The only thing you could do now is draw the line when and if, hopefully it doesn't happen, she begins to proselytize on her view with others. That would really be hard. And in that case, you can't control that either.

All you can do, if it's with your children, is to offer an alternate view and explain your reasons why. I mean, I don't know, this is a tough situation, and I don't think we ever encountered this, Amy, as a question. But what would your insights be here? I don't think I would put too much effort into trying to convince her if this is an emotional reason why she's against it.

I don't see that there's a whole lot of value in that. However, what you might want to do

is just take persuasion off the table and say, "Look, I understand I'm not going to persuade you, but what I really want is for you to understand why I am pro-life. And I just want to make sure you understand that." That's good.

And at the very least, what this will do, because part of the appeal of the pro-choice position is the idea that the pro-lifers want to hurt women and they're against women and they want to subjugate them. So what you could say is, "Look, I know there's a lot of people saying things like that, and I just want to make sure you understand the reasons why I disagree with abortion." And just make sure she can explain it and say, "What is your understanding of my beliefs?" And just make sure she understands. And just be clear, "Look, I'm not trying to force you into this position.

I just want to make sure that we understand each other." And listen to her. What are her reasons? Maybe she gives you the reasons of her trauma, and it's not clear what that is, but if there is a trauma that's preventing her from accepting the pro-life position, then that might be something you might want to work on with her or help her to work on and work through. Because obviously, there's something more important in her life to deal with right now than whether or not she's pro-choice, assuming she's not about to abort your child.

So you might want to focus on that and pray because obviously it sounds like that trauma needs to be healed before any progress can be made. But again, this is not something you should destroy your marriage over, for sure. So just make sure she understands what your reasons are, tell her you're taking persuasion off the table, you're not going to try and persuade her, take that pressure off of her and pray and help her with her trauma.

Those are only things that I can think of, Greg. Yeah, we'll put it. By the way, the Josh Brahm's point that you might benefit from is called the human rights argument or something to the equal rights argument.

And that's on our website too, if you want to look for that. And that's the name of his organization, I think, something like equalrights.com or something. Equal Rights Institute.

Oh gosh, I can't. Like that. Sorry Josh.

Josh Brahm. No, no S. Right. Right.

I think it's the equal rights institute. I hope I'm getting it right. Yo, Hanso Betch and no, that's Bach.

Who's the other? The Brahm. There is Brahms. But he does have an S. Oh, well, now I just messed things up.

So it's not like that guy. All right. Well, if you are interested in the equal rights argument, that's on our website at str.org. And you can just do a search for that.

And hopefully that will pop right up for you. But thank you for listening. If you have a question, send that to us on Twitter with the hashtag #STRask or you can go through our website.

Just look for our podcasts at the top of the page at str.org. Choose hashtag #STRask and you'll find a link there to send us your question. All right. Thank you.

We look forward to hearing from you. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cocle for Stand to Reason.