

OpenTheo

How Can I Articulate the Beauty of the Christian Worldview in a Nutshell?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to articulate the beauty of the Christian worldview in a nutshell and whether “separation of church and state” requires public school teachers to not reference the Bible and government employees to remove anything Bible related from their offices.

- * People are upset because a politician said he has a biblical worldview. How can we articulate the beauty of our worldview to others in a nutshell?
- * What should I say to people who think public school teachers shouldn't reference God or Scripture because of “separation of church and state”?
- * What should we do when upper management in local government tells employees they need to remove anything Bible related from their offices?

Transcript

I'm Amy Hall and you're listening to Stand to Reason's hashtag STRask Podcast and with me is Greg Cokol and we are here to answer your questions. We're chuckling because we're both sick, but Amy doesn't sound sick. I do.

We have the same like, whatever it is, but light stages but it's still afflicting us. Nevertheless, nevertheless, we are stepping up to do our job. Hopefully, hopefully you can bear with our cold voices.

All right, let's start with the question from Marcy. There has been push back against the politician who says he has a biblical worldview. Bill Maher was especially vitriolic in response.

How can we articulate the beauty of our worldview to others in a nutshell, so to speak? Well, in a nutshell, hmm, that's a pretty big task. And the, I guess, my impulse in this kind of circumstance is to make the case, as I mentioned before, I've used this phrase

that that Christianity, the Christian view of reality is the best explanation for the way things are. In other words, it fits the world as we perceive it.

And Bill Maher is an atheist, yet he has kind of righteous indignation about a whole host of things and particularly about religious conservatives. Now, he's not left us. He's a liberal, but right now he's, he's, his screeds have been challenging the left, which that he, they ought to and he sees the nonsense there and he can get away with it because he's so highly positioned.

But notice that the screeds always entail, as I mentioned, the kind of righteous indignation this that he sees happening is wrong. Well, the question then to ask is you're an atheist, right? Yes. So it's just molecules in motion, right? Yes.

So where, where, we'll have to be careful. I answered the question. I almost said, where does the concept of right and wrong come from? But that's not really what I mean, because the concern here is in our concept of right and wrong, because if there is no God, the concept is an error.

We could have the concept for a lot of reasons. The question is, where do we get the standard by which we judge right and wrong? Now, I know the question is, how can we show how noble and good and beautiful the Christian worldview is? But that starts with morality, it seems to me, that there, that, that we have moral intuitions that, that manifest themselves, no matter what we talk about, no matter what our worldview is. And this is because every human being, as Francis Schaeffer's pointed out, is made in the image of God and has to live in the world that God made.

And therefore, their, their natural tendency is to reflect the world as it actually is, even if it doesn't fit their world. And it turns out that morality makes no sense, objective morality, the kind of morality that is necessary to ground the problem of evil, this makes no sense in an atheistic worldview. I make a big deal about this in street sports, in the chapter, evil, atheism's fatal flaw, because I think it's a flaw for atheism, not for theism.

But the, the point is that God is angry against evil because he's good. Just like Bill Maher considers his, his anger against evil and virtue. And if people aren't angry against evil, that's a vice, even from his perspective.

So what we can do is we can take the most important element, that element being morality, that most important element of, of goodness, because goodness is obviously a moral term. And we can say it's only within a theistic worldview where goodness makes any sense at all. Because in an atheistic worldview, these words are meaningless in the sense that we usually use them.

You can use them in a very subjective way. You could say, well, these things are good for me because I like them. But now you're just talking about flavors of ice cream.

You could say, or Bill Maher could say, I think freedom of speech is good, but that's my subjective opinion. And then of course, the leftist can say freedom of speech is bad. And that's their subjective opinion.

That's all the further you could go. You can't adjudicate between the two positions because there's no standard outside of the subjective element to adjudicate from. So this puts the atheist in a terrible position with the most foundational element that is goodness itself, because it ends up nullifying and eviscerating all notions of objective good.

And by the way, therefore, all notions of objective evil, which makes the complaint about the problem of evil incoherent coming from an atheist. That's where I would start. And in the tactics book I have in the 10th anniversary edition, there's a chapter called inside out where I play out this notion that God has placed inside of us all kinds of things that are true in virtue of being made the image of God.

And no human being can avoid voicing those truths even when they hold a worldview that's contrary to it. I can't ground it. And my exhortation then, my advice in that chapter is just listen, listen to what they're saying.

And then when they make a statement about anything that does not fit properly in the worldview they hold, then here's the bridge. I'm confused. I'm confused.

What do you mean you're confused? Well, you're an atheist, right? Yeah, of course. So it's just molecules and motions, right? Yeah, of course. But now you're raising all these moral judgments against people who disagree with you.

Yes, those are evil. Okay, so where are you getting your standard from by which you're judging these things is right or wrong? So notice how carefully it's not how do you know people with the speed limit by looking at the sign? But that isn't what establishes the limit as a rule. It is the government that does that.

Okay, so I'm making this distinction between how we know and what it is that grounds the information itself, the authority that makes sense of that. Now, this is a concept that we've talked about many, many times in this program over the years on the show. But to me, it's really, really vital.

We can show that Christianity is good because it makes sense of goodness to begin with. And if someone were to say, well, my sense of right or wrong, that's just social contract. That's just evolution or whatever.

Okay, so by the way, that's just a subjective means. So if we change a social contract, like, for example, before women had rights or gays had rights or blacks had rights, we had a social contract then you're fine with that, because that was a social contract then. Now, we just have a different social contract.

See what happens when relativism is the foundation for these things. Okay, there's no basis for ultimate right or wrong. So or evolution.

So you're just saying your evolution disagrees with that person's evolution. Really? That's it? So what's your complaint? They evolve differently. So what? Anyway, that would be the platform from which I would try to move forward to say that only something like the Christian worldview, certainly a theistic worldview, can provide the foundation for goodness of any kind.

So building on that, I have two answers. One of them is related to politics, which in this situation it would be appropriate for that. And then one is a more cultural answer if this isn't a different conversation.

But in this particular conversation, Greg, the whole idea of goodness needing grounding, we can just move that over to refer to rights. Because if you care about the political system, then look at what our system is built on. It's built on the very core of it is the idea that we are all created equal in the image of God.

That is the core of our entire system. That's the declaration. And that is what that is what makes our rights unassailable.

That is what grounds them. That is what protects them. If our rights only depend on the government giving us rights, they're not safe.

No, it's right. Government take them away. And they're not real.

So they don't have to be safe because they're nothing. So without that grounding in the image of God, you lose the beauty of our entire political system. So that's I have three things about our political system that depend on Christianity.

And I'm sure there are many more. But the second thing is, is the very idea of the gospel and what Jesus did to change the entire world's understanding of power and goodness. Because what he did was he used his power to serve and protect the weak and the needy and sinners who did not deserve it.

He used his power to serve. That's the bottom line. And that was a new concept that has changed his entire world.

It changed the way we look at politics. It changed the way we look at everything. That is based on Christianity.

So you want someone who has that worldview? Yes, servant leadership. The third thing is it recognizes the nature of human beings as being fallen. And so it protects the system from the sin of the people by dividing up the power.

So it protects us from authoritarian rule and all sorts of different things when it's working

correctly. So the grounding of our value as being made in the image of God, servant leadership and the nature of recognizing the nature of man. Those are three aspects of our government that undergird everything that's beautiful about the nature of our government.

Those all rest on Christianity. So those would be three quick things to do in terms of politics. Now in terms of culture, all you have to do is look around you.

What did this, what did it build? What did Christianity build? Now here that book by Tom Holland, who's not a Christian, went through history and looked at how Christianity has shaped the world. So just looking at the ideas, we'll show you the beauty of it, but you don't even have to go there. Look at the architecture, the paintings, the music, all the beauty that Christianity inspired, not atheism.

What is atheism inspired? Strange art that means nothing and it's random and relativistic and subject. Yes, exactly. Thank you.

That was the but look at all of the beauty that Christianity has created, the literacy in the world. I know I've mentioned this before but someone did a study. It was probably 10 years ago on where Christianity made the biggest difference or what was the result of Christian missionaries.

And they said where the Christian missionaries actually cared about converting people, that's where Christianity made the biggest difference in literacy, in rights, in all sorts of things that made their lives better. So in all these ways, it doesn't take long to look around you and see what Christianity is done. The problem is people now have no idea where the ideas in this world came from in the first place.

Mm-hmm. Nice to see that. That's all I have to say about that.

Okay, Greg. So we have two questions now that are similar. So I'll read both of them and you can take them in whatever order you want.

One is from Camille and one is from anonymous. So Camille asks, what should I say to people who feel public school leaders shouldn't reference God or Scripture because of separation of church and state? And then anonymous asks, what do we do when upper management and local government tells employees to remove anything Bible related from offices under the religious skies? So they're both about separation of church and state, one in school, one in government. All right, I guess I was concerned about the last one.

The last one with anonymous is that the school one? So the last one was what do we do in upper management in local government tells employees to remove anything Bible related from their offices under the religious skies. Okay, well, these are both the same questions. And they have to do the application of the way people understand the

doctrine of separation of church and state.

The problem is it's not a constitutional doctrine. A lot of people know this now because it's been talked about, but I guess still there's a lot of confusion about this. The phrase of separation of church and state is not in the declaration and it's not in the Constitution.

The Constitution, the Bill of Rights has different language. It's non-establishment and that's the first amendment. The non-establishment is not the same as separation.

Okay? And in fact, there's lots of examples of court cases that have made this clear. Nevertheless, administrators are going based on a false understanding of government policies. I have a booklet at home that I've had for about 20 years and it's the, I think it's with the California school system and it's endorsed by every liberal agency you can possibly imagine.

Okay? And what it is is a guide book for the appropriate expression of religion in schools. It turns out there are massive liberties that are affirmed in this that nobody is aware of. I don't even know what the title of this book is, but I have to find it.

It's a small booklet and I'd recommended it years ago. But basically, there's massive amount of opportunity. The problem is administrators have a false understanding of this and so do people in the school or parents or whatever and especially atheistic parents and when they see something that smacks of Christian religion especially, then they get all upset and then they call the administrator and the administrator doesn't want problems so it shuts down the Christian.

They build a policy that is unconstitutional and religious defense groups like ADF, the Alliance for Defending Freedom and first, can it make up first liberty or first freedoms? That's figured out because I write checks to these people. They're doing fabulous work and they litigate on behalf of the Christian. They win almost every time on these kinds of issues because this is clear violation of religious freedom.

You cannot tell people they can't keep a religious object on their desk. This is not a meaningful violation of non-establishment. Notice I'm not saying separation because if you say separation of church and state, people can make that into mean anything.

The language in the and by the way, it goes further than that. I'm just going for memory now but it says the Congress shall make no law, I think something, reflecting the establishment of religion or interfering with the free exercise thereof or interfering with the free exercise thereof. That just gets completely forgotten with the separation of church and state language.

Now, this language comes from a letter that Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury, the congregation that Danbury Connecticut, I think is a Baptist congregation, assuring them that because there is, as he characterized it, a wall of separation from church and state,

the state was not going to interfere in the church's business or more broadly in Christian's business, the free exercise that is guaranteed by the first amendment. It's about limiting the government. It's about limiting the government and in fact, that's what the first amendment is.

It's about limiting the government. It is not and explicitly so about limiting the individual expression. It's explicitly protecting the individual expression.

I'm looking in my drawer here, I think somewhere I got a Constitution. Maybe it's in the drawer in front of you right there, Amy. I don't know.

It's a little and it blows my mind when people keep going back to separation of church and state. So how would someone handle this in either case with Camille or Anonymous? The question is, where is the, okay, here it is, Amy found it for me quickly. She's clever here.

Congress shall make no law respecting and establishment of religion. Of course, everybody understood what they meant at the time. Respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

So I got it pretty close. That's it. What I would suggest in these cases is that you take this language to your superior and say, why is this rule in place? Well, because separation of church and state.

Well, separation of church and where is that language in the declaration of the Constitution? That's a question. Well, it's not there. What is the language of the language's first amendment? What does that say? There it is, one sentence, or, or, or, what was I, interfering, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof? It doesn't say anything about location.

You can exercise any way you want as long as it's inside your home, as long as it's inside your church building. No, it's, it's, it's, it's a general latitude. You can wear any t-shirt you want.

Why can't you put a Bible on your desk? You can. The teacher can do that. That's legal, okay? And, and a whole bunch of other things.

But, see, most people don't know about this. And I wish I had the mid source for that particular booklet, but, um, these organizations have to litigate this continually. And, uh, so I would just ask the, ask the administrator, then why, why is this? And I'll tell you why this is, because they, the administrator would much, uh, is much happier putting up with a much more docile Christian, who they can just say, no, you can't have anything to get out of here than saying that to an angry atheist mom or dad, because they fuss and they litigate and they're going to make it hard for the administrator.

So the administrator is going to walk on other people's rights to make his life easier. That's just the way it always works. And this is where it's this squeaky wheel.

That's going to get the, the oil. If you want to put something there and you get asked why you're not allowed to and, and see what they say. Well, the amendment provides for the free exercise of my religious views.

Are you saying that I can't exercise freely my religious views by just having this cross or whatever on my desk? The mistake that's being made here is that they're assuming that their view is neutral. Their view is not neutral. Everyone has a worldview.

So every teacher has a worldview. They have a way that they understand the meaning of who we are, what the problem is, where we're going, how to fix it, all those things. They're quite different for say an atheist or a Christian.

There's not the, the, the atheist worldview is not the neutral default worldview. It's not. So I think when it comes to the public school teacher, I would say, you know, everyone has a worldview.

And so everyone has a right to express that. Now, that doesn't mean the teacher should spend time trying to convert his students necessarily in, on, on during school time. But it does, it does mean that they don't have to never say anything about what their view is or express it or explain the view.

Even if you're just saying, well, this is the view from a materialist perspective and this is, or a, you know, post-modern perspective, whatever it is, relativistic perspective. And this is the Christian perspective. There's nothing wrong with that.

There's nothing wrong with referencing what you think. So I would definitely contact the Alliance Defending Freedom if you're having trouble with this. But you can't just, you just have to remember, everyone has a worldview.

You can't just rule one worldview out by fiat. Like you just say, well, I want to win by default. So therefore you cannot speak.

Right. Right. So they just need to understand that we all have a perspective and that perspective is not neutral.

It has a lot of implications. I mean, we talked about a lot of implications for the government earlier in this very episode and all of those implications matter. So these, these are not, you know, we don't have to default to someone else's worldview.

Notice in this classroom setting, when people talk about Big Bang, no external cause, a life of non-life, the development of life from lower to higher, it's non teleological. It means there's no goal. There's no purpose in it.

So in other words, God wasn't involved in causing anything that happened. I mean, the answer to that is no, of course, if there's no purpose. Well, how was that neutral? Notice the question being used to make your point.

How was that neutral? The theta says God is involved in it. That's not neutral on your view. You're saying God was not involved.

How is that neutral? Because it's right. And that's a thing that they need to at least acknowledge why they're ruling out the other view. It's not because it's religious or it's not neutral.

It's because they don't agree with it. That's the problem. But this is why we are guaranteed in the Constitution the liberty to exercise our own convictions in the public square.

And the government nor no government nor any government agency can interfere with that. And this is what's happening in the public school circumstance or the government circumstance. And not allowing anyone to say anything else.

How is that not establishment of that view? Yeah. So I think people just have not thought through this very carefully. And Christians as well as non-Christians, I just I I I hope a day comes when people think much more seriously about all these things and stop just repeating slogans because that it's it's hard to get anywhere when people are just repeating slogans.

In fact, I think I do have a role play on this issue in the tactics book in the early part where I'm explaining the game plan. And exactly when people say, well, there's separation of church and state, then there's a series of questions that I have there as part of the role play. But this is the idea.

It's a bad. It's a it's a it's a not it's a notion separation of church and state. The way it's exercised is a notion that is a not constitutional, but it's worse than that.

It is contrary to the Bill of Rights, the way it's being exercised. And so it needs to be opposed. And if it's not opposed, then people are going to do whatever they want.

Well, thank you, Marcy and Camille and anonymous. We appreciate hearing from you. You can send us your question on X with the hashtag strask or you can go to our website at str.org and just look for our hashtag strask podcast page.

And right at the top of the page, you'll see a link there. You just click on that link and you can send us your question. We really appreciate you listening.

Spread the word. We'd love to have more listeners. And that's it.

Thank you for listening. This is Amy and Greg Gocal for Stand to Reason.

