

OpenTheo

Why Should We Treat Everyone Respectfully?

November 21, 2024



#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about why we should treat everyone respectfully, how to reconcile Jesus calling the Pharisees a brood of vipers with the instructions in 1 Peter 3:15 to treat people with gentleness and respect, and the charge that Christians have no evidence for God.

* How would you explain to a believer why we should treat everyone respectfully when Hitler shouldn't have been treated respectfully?

* How do we reconcile Jesus calling the Pharisees a brood of vipers with 1 Peter 3:15, which says we should show gentleness and respect when defending the faith?

* Religion is synonymous with pretending to know things you do not know. No man has ever seen God. No Christian has any evidence for God. Yet you claim authority based on a book and an invisible God. Talk about ego. Wow!

Transcript

This is Greg Koukl and Amy Hall, and you're listening to the hashtag S-T-R-Ask podcast. I'm just mixing it up a little bit, Greg, for your sake. You're getting me confused.

I'm getting mixed up. All right, we're going to start with a question from Aaron. How would you explain to a believer that you're listening to the hashtag hashtag S-T-R-Ask podcast? Well, I guess that's a fair point.

And I think the answer, to say it more precisely, is that we should treat people as if they're valuable human beings who made the image of God. Now, that requires different behavior in different circuits. All right.

I mean, there were times when Jesus went after some people in an aggressive way and made them look ridiculous, frankly, in some circumstances. And so it doesn't mean that we are never, in a certain sense, allowed to be aggressive and be truthful or forthright about a circumstance or a person or an individual. All right.

So, characteristically, we are to engage with people with respect. That's the appropriate way to respond to those who are valuable in the image of God. There are other times when we can be much more aggressive because the circumstances are changed.

All right. I'll tell you an odd example of what I thought was a great balance here. It was a movie called *The Green Mile*.

And in that movie, Tom Hanks played a prison guard. And it was an awful prison. I'm trying to remember who the warden of the prison was, the actor.

He just played Churchill not too long ago, got Academy Award for it. But he's the kind of guy who disappears into all his roles. But he plays a really good bad guy.

All right. And very effective. Another very convincing.

And he's the prison warden. And so there's all of this ugly stuff going on. What's key here, though, is that you have people who are prisoners and who are due punishment incarceration, all the things that are appropriate for a good judicial system.

But they were being treated inhumanely. In other words, far beyond what their incarceration required as punishment, they were treated in a very inhumane fashion. Because they were prisoners with the exception of the Tom Hanks character.

And he was one who exemplified kind of a grace, an appropriate grace and an appropriate respect towards these people. Appropriate in the sense that he respected them as human beings made the image of God. Now that wasn't the language, obviously, of the script.

But this is what he exemplified there. And so I think the best way to put it is not to say everybody is due respect. Because respect, sometimes the answer is no, depending on the circumstances and depending on what you mean by respect.

But what they are to be done and what is required is that they are treated as human beings made the image of God in whatever context you're addressing them. Okay, does that make sense? It makes so much sense. Greg, I was trying to think of a way to say that and I've got a couple notes here, but you said it's so much better than I was going to say it.

That is the perfect way to put it. The way I had it here was we should, well, I have come back to the main image of God, but the way we should treat bad people is justly, not disrespectfully. I don't think that's the same thing.

Wait, not respectful, justly not respectfully. Not disrespectfully. Not disrespectfully.

Okay. So if somebody's bad, the answer to that is not disrespect. The answer is just justice.

I see what you're saying. But it may look like disrespect by other standards and other circumstances. Do you think that would be fair to say? Yeah, I think I think possibly.

So that's kind of what I was trying to get at. The circumstance matters, but it's not just a matter of I'm going to tear you down. It's a matter of I'm going to respond justly to whatever you have done and whatever situation we're in.

But here's my problem. When somebody asked questions like this, if I were to say, okay, I will grant you. Let's just say for the sake of argument, you can treat Hitler disrespectfully.

I'm not sure much follows from that because the problem is now everyone is Hitler. If you view everyone as Hitler and you treat them the way you would treat Hitler, what this question really is saying is I just want to treat people disrespectfully. I want to respond in a way that is demeaning or rude or whatever.

And I want to be justified in that because that's how I would treat Hitler. But the problem is people, Hitler was a unique person. So I hate to use him as a standard to figure out how to treat other people.

That parallel almost never applies. It does apply sometime, but almost never because he's such an extreme example. So even if I were to grant that, I just don't think much follows from that.

But in light of that, what I want to do is respond to the idea that we should treat people disrespectfully because I see this happening. It's just appalling some of the stuff I see on Twitter and people who are Christians and the way they're interacting with people. It is just, it makes me so sad.

And I think people feel justified because of the bad ideas that are being propagated. But again, what you said just encapsulates everything. You treat them as if they're made in the image of God and in a just manner however that situation calls for.

But in the normal situations, like all you have to do is go look at 1 Peter because that whole book is about how to respond to people who are maligning you. I mean specifically, that's what it's about. And he's very careful to say we should respond as Jesus responded, not reviling in return.

Now, again, you can be just without reviling in return and without lashing out and without treating them as if they're worthless human beings. No matter what kind of ideas they're propagating out there, you can fight against those ideas. But they're still human beings made in the image of God and you have to keep that in mind.

So some of the things Peter says, and the first thing I have here is to act in truth of human dignity and value. So you have to act in that truth. But Peter says different things about what this accomplishes.

And one of the things he says is that we are basically reflecting Jesus to the world. So we're supposed to respond as he did because he responded that way to us and he did that to save us. So as we are responding, as Jesus responded, we are working towards their salvation because

we're trying to show them the grace of God.

And again, I just have to keep saying this, this doesn't mean sweeping evil under the rug at all. So we show them who Christ is, we act as a parable of the gospel to people. We also show them the value of Jesus because if we continue to do what's right and we entrust ourselves to the judge who judges righteously and we allow him to bring about vengeance and an ultimate justice, and we don't give in to responding evil for evil.

We're showing the value of Christ. And this is actually why Peter says they're going to ask you for the reason for the hope that's within you. And the context is because you're not returning evil for evil, but you're responding with grace.

So that's what causes them to ask the reason for our hope. And all this is done for the sake of their salvation. So I know this is not an easy balance to figure out.

It really isn't, but the key thing is just goes back to exactly what you said. You treat people as if they're made in the image of God. Treat them justly.

That's not the same thing as treating them disrespectfully. And again, a great exemplification of this idea is the movie *The Green Mile* and *The Bad Guy* was played by Gary Odom. Oh, you remember the names? I finally downloaded it, but it was magnificent.

And I remember watching the movie. I don't know if it's like a magnificent movie, but what stood out for me was this character, the Tom Hanks character, is treating these prisoners like they're valuable human beings, even though they're incarcerated and being punished for what they've done. And murderers probably.

Full range. Okay, so this question follows from that question, Greg. This one comes from Anonymous, and you touched on this in the last question, but I'd like to hear what you have to say.

How do we reconcile Jesus calling the Pharisees a brood of vipers when in 1 Peter 3, 15, and 16 it says we should show gentleness and respect when defending the faith? Well, we don't. I think what this shows is that there are general rules that are sometimes, there's exceptions for it. I think that statement actually was John the Baptist who warned you to flee from the wrath that's to come, you brood of vipers.

And John the Baptist was on the extreme side. But sometimes an aggressive approach is required. Now Jesus did say you are whitewashed tombs with dead men's bones inside.

He said you find you go here and there are travel thousands of miles to find one disciple and you make him twice the son of hell as you as you are. What was interesting in both those cases is they were speaking factually and colorfully communicating the truth about these people. And it wasn't just putting these people down without cause.

They were speaking accurately and truthfully. And I think what we learn from that is there are times when we can be much more, we're justified to be much more aggressive depending on the nature of the circumstances. But we need to be careful about that.

Because John the Baptist did it, well, he's a fallen human being, so he may be a little over the top. But in the case of Jesus, Jesus is a legitimate example. There was no sin found in Jesus.

It is John the Baptist the first time. But actually here in Matthew Jesus does say, let's see, either make the tree good and it's fruit good or make the tree bad and it's fruit bad for the trees known by its fruit. You brood of vipers.

How can you be evil, speak what is good? He learned that from John the Baptist. But I think what that demonstrates is that there are circumstances where it's appropriate to be very aggressive and very straightforward and call a spade a spade so to speak. But even in this case, you get the idea that he's rebuking them, but it's not this snarky, trying to think of a word to describe what I see that's just constant mocking.

It doesn't strike me as feeling the same way. And maybe this is something again that we just have to get better at and figure out what to do because I do think we should strongly say the truth when it calls for it. So maybe this just involves developing wisdom so we can know what is called for in each situation.

But I would also say as a general rule, I think we get a lot more specific instructions from Peter than we do from what Jesus does because again, we're also not Jesus. So I think we didn't need to be careful about doing everything that he did. He's also because he's the judge too.

All right, Greg. Now I'm going to give you a chance to put all of that to work. Yeah, we're going to respond.

We're going to respond to a question from Dan and you can respond to this. Jess Lee and someone made the image of God. Actually, I thank you, Dan, for your questions.

He's he's sending a few questions before. All right, so here is his question. Religion is synonymous with pretending to know things you do not know.

No man has ever seen God. No Christian has any evidence for God, yet you claim authority based on a book and an invisible God. Talk about ego.

Wow. Well, you know, first, a whole bunch of things are going on there. Okay, and notice that these are complete assertions.

There's no rationale given at all. And then there's a and then there's a claim about the nature of faith. Faith is when you believe something and you have essentially know it's pretending to know things you do not know.

That's Peter Bogosian. That's almost a quotation out of atheist Peter Bogosian's book. Okay,

where it's called a manual for creating atheists.

Well, he's welcome. Dan's welcome into that opinion. The problem with that view is and this really this really kind of dawned upon me as I looked at the cobblestones history of philosophy.

Now, that's like 10 volumes going back to the ancients and all the way to the present time. And I originally bought the series, the volumes of the history of philosophy when I started my M.A. Phil program under J.P. Moreland. I wanted to be more educated to be able to draw from a standard resource about this.

It turns out that from about the mid-second century, maybe third century, up until the 19th century, you got like 1600 years. Virtually every single prominent philosopher in Western civilization was a biblical theist. Now that doesn't prove that biblical theism is true.

What it seems to indicate without question that it ain't dumb. That it ain't the case that there is no evidence. Ever read Thomas Aquinas? Ever read Anselm? Ever read Augustine? These guys were towering intellects.

Now, you may think that their arguments don't go through for whatever reasons, but they aren't nothing. They aren't mere assertions. Acting like you know what you don't know.

These were all religious people who were able to parse out the discipline of epistemology much better than actually anybody can do now. When empiricism is only one means of knowing things using your five senses. But empiricism is flatly refuted because for one it's self-refuting.

And there are all kinds of things that we know that we don't see. I wonder if Dan knows what he's thinking. Of course he knows what he's thinking.

Can he see his thoughts? No, he can't see his thoughts. Well, if he says that there's no good evidence for God because we can't see him, then also by the same standard, there's no good evidence for Dan's thoughts because even Dan can't see them. Now, Dan has private access to them, but it's direct access.

It's not through seeing. And there are all kinds of things need to be true for the empirical method to work to begin with. Which is largely employed in this scientific endeavor.

But the implication is, okay, you're pretending to know things you do not know. Well, that's a matter of debate. That's the very crux of it.

This is just an assertion. But it's a standard atheist assertion because religion is faced on faith and faith is pretending to know what you don't know. According to them.

According to them. See, they've defined it. Now, they want to believe that for themselves.

Fine. But they can apply that to religious people as if that's their definition. Because if you're going to refute a person's view, you got to refute their view.

Not your distortion of their view. And I've talked about this at length in story of reality. I talked about it at length in probably in tactics and at length in street smarts when I deal with atheism.

And this is one of the kind of claims that comes through. Now, of course, this doesn't prove or give evidence for our responses here that God does exist. It's just making the point that this kind of complaint falls apart is vacuous.

It falls apart immediately. It mischaracterizes at least Christian religious understanding of what faith entails. It totally mischaracterizes the entire field of knowledge by asserting an empirical demand for verification for knowledge.

But of course, if you think there must be an empirical verification for you to know something, apparently the person who's saying that believes that he knows that an empirical verification is required to know something. And that itself cannot be verified empirically. That's why it's self-refuting.

And no Christian has any evidence for God. Well, how about this? A big bang needs a big banger. Does that make sense? A footprint in the sand seems to be evident for someone walking there.

Oh, well, it might not be the right understanding of that footprint, though it seems pretty obvious. But it's not no evidence. And by the way, I deal with both of these problems in street smarts because there's a difference between saying your evidence is not persuasive.

And there being no evidence. Okay. And a guy like Dan is not persuaded.

Okay. Fine. That's his, that's his, his prerogative to look at what's there and say it's not, it doesn't go through.

It's not adequate, whatever. But it's a whole different thing to say there's no evidence. I think Darwinian evolution is false.

I would never say there's no evidence for it. Because homology, for example, seems to be at least a first glance support for dissent with modification. All right.

That, that, that so many creatures have similar characteristics. It looks like they evolved from some primitive form and then took their own directions, but carried with them these same characteristics. Okay.

Now, I don't think when you look closer at it turns out to be decisive evidence. Okay. But it still is evidence.

So my, I think that this way of approaching the details is not, not charitable at all. It's utterly dismissive. And it's, to me, it's evidence of somebody who is not thoughtful about the issue.

Well, that's how I take it. If somebody says there's no evidence, I just assume they've never,

they've never looked at any, anything. But then, but then why would I have a conversation about this? Because you've never thought about it.

If you're saying there's no evidence. I think most of the time what they mean is I'm not convinced by it. But they should say what they mean because it just really sounds like they haven't even looked into this at all.

Especially if the person, I mean, atheists characteristically present themselves as the rational ones. We're the rational ones, the reasonable ones. We're the brights, the language that, oh gosh, now I just had his name and I lost it.

Was that Dawkins? Not Dawkins. One of the other guy who just died. Oh, Daniel, Daniel, Daniel.

He coined that term for his kind. We're the brights. Okay.

Well, then, then it seems to me you can understand the Christian view and the notion of faith that they offer. Enough to be able to at least engage that and then show, well, your faith is based on evidence. The text says, by many convincing proofs, Acts chapter one, you know, and Paul reasoned with them from the scriptures.

Then, then, then, Acts 17 and having presented proof for these claims, having raised him from the dead, you know, this is all throughout. Now, whether somebody believes those things are not, that's a different matter. The point is, what is being offered as a foundation for confidence and belief? Faith, if you will.

It's reasons and evidence. So, to say there is no evidence, that would be true of almost every other religious view. Where is the evidence that substantiates your understanding, your theology, that kind of thing? But that is not the case for Christianity.

I mean, religious apologetics grew out of Christianity. It's built into the warp and woof of the biblical worldview because God invades the world. That's the view and leaves behind fingerprints and we can look at the fingerprints and we can point them out.

Now, if you want to show why that isn't a good conclusion to draw from the alleged fingerprints, that's another matter. No problem, okay? But that's entirely a different thing from saying no Christian has any evidence for God. What about the origin of the universe? What about the origin of life? What about the origin of conscience? What about object to morality, which is necessary to ground the problem of evil, which atheists frequently complain about? Evolution is not going to give you object to morality.

It can only give you subject to morality if it can give you any morality at all. That's another discussion. But here, the last line, can you read it? Yet you claim authority based on a book and an invisible God.

Authority based on a book. I'm wondering where Dan gets most of his information about the

world that he thinks is actually true. We get it from books.

We get it from books. So to dismiss a conviction because you get it from a book is silly. Almost everything we know we find out from someone else who we think is an authority or an adequate authority to give us the truth of the matter.

The question is whether that authority or that book is trustworthy. That's a fair question. And it's one we can ask about the Bible.

But he's not saying that. You get it from a book. Hand-waving.

Go away. Dumb, stupid. By the way, when you go to college, do you buy some books for your classes? So that's why this is silly.

But then he says, and invisible God, talk about ego. Well, that is a moral judgment. In other words, you guys got a big inflated ego and that's not a good thing to have.

But wait a minute. Where does an atheist get the standard that it's not good to have a inflated ego? Where is the moral foundation coming from for him? From evolution? Why should I care what he evolved to believe is good or bad? It's just an evolution. I could have evolved differently.

On what grounds does he condemn what he thinks is an inflated ego? So this kind of challenge goes south in all kinds of ways. I just want to comment on something that showed up a couple of times in this question. So one comment here is, no man has ever seen God and then he brings up, it's based on a book, an invisible God.

So the idea that God is unseen seems to be a problem for him. But here's something, Dan, that you can consider. If someone were to say to me that there's a physical God, I would immediately know he was false.

Because you cannot have a physical God creating all a physical reality. He'd be creating himself. That's just not possible.

If all a physical reality began at a certain time and God existed apart from that, then he can't be a physical being. Therefore, we can't see him. I mean, that's just obvious.

That's the nature of being a God or the God. Well, it's certainly the nature of being a God who's possible. Because I know immediately if someone says that they can see a physical God, that that's not possible.

So it's actually the opposite of what you're thinking here. Saying that there's an invisible God means that it's possible this God is actually real. And it's the opposite of what you have assumed here.

Incidentally, I'm presuming an objection. Well, you think Jesus is God. Yes, he's the God man.

And what we see is the man. We see the body that is a physical body. God is not physical.

That's Mormonism, not Christianity. Right. Well, thank you, Dan.

We do appreciate hearing from you. We actually love to hear from people who have different views. Opposing views.

Yeah, opposing views. We like to engage those ideas on this show, but also on the other show where you can call in. And we always love hearing from people.

That's what makes us interesting. We actually like having conversations about what is true. But that's why sometimes questions that are only insults, and this goes for Christians too.

This is why we talked about not just insulting people as a matter of course, because that doesn't get anywhere. That doesn't create any conversation or any discussion about what is true. And that's where the exciting conversations are.

So that's what you want to go towards. So if you're just giving insults in order to shut people down, you're missing out on what we actually want to do, which is persuade people to believe what is true. Because the truth is valuable, and it's good, and it's beautiful.

And the reason why is because God exists. All right, Greg, we're out of time. Thank you, Aaron, and anonymous.

And Dan, we appreciate hearing from you. Just send it with a hashtag STRS or go to our website at str.org. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cogle for Stand to Reason.