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Your Religion Prohibits You, Not Me

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Question about how to respond to a meme that says, "Your religion does not prohibit me from anything. It prohibits you. Learn the difference."

* How should I respond to a meme that says, "Your religion does not prohibit me from anything. It prohibits you. Learn the difference"?

Transcript

Welcome listeners to the hashtag STR Ask Podcast with Amy Hall and Greg Koukl. We are so glad to have you here and we really appreciate you sending in your questions. And today we're going to start with one from Leslie.

Sounds good. All right. I recently saw a meme that said, quote, your religion does not prohibit me from anything.

It prohibits you. Learn the difference. I've thought about how I would respond to this probably within appeal to objective morality, but would love to hear what you think.

Thank you for taking my question. Well, I'm not even sure what they mean by that to be quite honest. It only restricts you, not me.

Now, of course, this is a relativistic approach. This is your system. You have to obey your system.

I don't have to obey your system. I have my own system that makes this demands on me and they're different from the demands on you. That's my sense of it.

Now, I'd want to get clarification of that, of course. I'm guessing it's probably a political statement, I would think. Like, they don't want you using... This is just my guess.

They don't want you making political decisions based on your religion so that they're prohibited from doing something that their religion doesn't prohibit them from you. That's what they mean. There's all kinds of confusion involved here.

One's motivations for voting regarding a policy have nothing to do with their right to vote regarding a policy. People get this confused all the time. Well, that's your personal moral view.

Now you're trying to force your personal moral view on everyone else. Of course, that's the nature of politics. Politics is the nature of politics is the exercise of power, the appropriate exercise of power for the common good.

Now, people have different understandings of what the common good looks like and when power is appropriate, when it's appropriate to exercise power, and that's based on individual values. So, if you are an atheist, you're going to have a set of values that's going to dictate for you when it's appropriate for the government to step in and exercise its power regarding a particular issue. If you're a Muslim or a Hasidic Jew or an evangelical Christian, you have different sets of values that inform the decisions you make when it comes to polling, voting.

So, if somebody were to say, you have no right to impose your view on me, well, then who gets to vote? Because if that role is sustained across the board, then no one has any right of imposing their parochial view on somebody else. Everybody has a parochial, like an individual private personal kind of view, it's just for them. So then who gets to vote? And see, this to me has been a subtle way of trying to disqualify one point of view from the political discussion in favor of another point of view when the way that they disqualify it equally disqualifies everything.

And so, you know, Christians should be allowed to have their religious views reflected in policy. Really? Okay, then who should be allowed to have their views reflected in policy? Only non-religious views. So in other words, only people who are not religious are allowed to have a voice in matters in this country.

All right, so that's the first problem there. And this is ubiquitous. It's all over.

When election time comes up, this language is repeated over and over and over again. Get out of the way, you're forcing your Christian morals on the rest of us. Okay, who's all law forces of morality.

Let me just even back up to our primary level. Law itself is an exercise in morality, that is what I mentioned before, the use of power for the common good. Okay, so if it doesn't have a moral justification, if your use of power, government power does not have a legitimate moral justification, then it's not a legitimate use of power.

And everybody knows this and this is why they complain about all sorts of things. So the nature of politics is to use power to enforce morality of some sort. Okay, so then who gets to who gets to play in that game? Who gets to weigh in? And the answer is everybody gets to weigh in.

And if you disqualify a person's point of view simply because it's their moral point of view, grounded in some religious conviction, then you've just isolated and disenfranchised a massive portion of the population. That is a whole bunch of people that think differently than you do, skeptic or complainer, objector, whatever. And it's just a way of kind of thinning the field so that only one voice gets to be expressed.

So, so that that that is a misconstrual and a misunderstanding of the entire political process, especially in a representative republic. Okay. Well, we all get in principle, at least we all have a voice and we all get a vote, one vote in principle.

So, so that's that's the first difficulty there is like, like, you know, that's your set of rules. Okay, so another difficulty is just the relativism that seems to be expressed in there. The the the comment seems to imply that everybody's values are just a matter of a private or private affair.

And that's not a problem for secularists, unless the values are grounded religiously in some kind of religious conviction. Okay. And that's when they they they cry foul.

Now, this is why from a strategic perspective, when Christians are making their case in the public square, they ought to be making their case based on shared values that reflect the common good. So, we don't make our our case with regards to abortion, for example, because, well, I have these biblical texts that say that human beings are valuable and unborn human beings are just as valuable as born human beings and therefore it's wrong to kill them. We're making our case based on a biblical rationale that others don't accept.

Most of the times when it comes to broader cultural issues, we can use it what I call and others have called an external approach. Now, there's we're not campaigning from the text. We're campaigning from the nature of reality, which we're convinced the text accurately reflects and speaks to.

So, our case against abortion, and this is the this is the moral logic of the pro-life field. I actually spell this out in a number of ways, but in the streets warrants most recently. Okay.

The moral case for the pro-life field is this, it's wrong to take the life of an innocent human being, or you could say a life of a human being or innocent human being without proper justification. Okay. That strikes me to be a fairly uncontroversial moral thing, and I'm not it's not a Bible verse.

Now, the notion is grounded in the Bible. Now, she'll not murder, but you don't need the Bible to know that. Okay.

Secondly, the second step is abortion does that. It takes an innocent human life without proper justification. That needs to be cast out a little bit in the book.

I talk about that because what we have is not the mother's body. It's a different body growing in here. Her and the body that's growing is human.

And it's a body that she's producing because that's the nature of motherhood. I mean, no duh. So again, no appeal to scripture there.

There is a biblical argument that can be made with Christians who care about the Bible, but that's not the way we make our argument in the public square. So when people then are inclined to say, you're forcing your religious view on me, my question is going to be, what is it about my argument? And if we can articulate it carefully. It's wrong to take the life innocent human being abortion doesn't therefore abortion is wrong.

There's no religion in that. You have to deal with the argument itself. And this is why it's important to have a basic understanding of the logic of the pro-life view, which I've just explained so that you can make the case and embellish on it as you're able.

But also then by looking at that basic case, point out that where's the religion and what I just said? Do you agree with the first case? First premise? Do you agree with the second premise? Well, then the conclusion follows. It has nothing to do with religion. Now, I may be religiously motivated to make this case, but my motivation is irrelevant to the argument and also irrelevant to my voice with regards to public policy.

You cannot disqualify somebody's voice in a representative of public like ours because you don't like where the idea came from. You can't disqualify that. This isn't an establishment of religion.

It's in the case of abortion and a whole bunch of other issues. You can talk about marriage. You can talk about gender, all kinds of controversial issues.

We are making our arguments here based on the nature of reality, and that's where the appeal is made. And it turns out that we can explain why reality is the way it is. It's teleological.

It's set up here for a reason. It's going somewhere. But we don't need to include that in our argument.

We just need to say look at the way the world is and the shared values that are obvious to everybody and then make our case from that. So there's a couple of things that are going on here in this simple challenge. Could you read the challenge again? Because I want to offer maybe it would be a tactical question given that background that might be out.

Your religion does not prohibit me from anything. It prohibits you. Learn the difference.

Okay. Well, the first question is, I'm not sure what you mean by that. Okay.

And secondly, do you think that I'm making, in what way am I making my argument regarding some issue based on my religion? And what's interesting when it comes to the gender, you know, notice all the times that conservatives especially are told follow the science, follow the science, follow the science. Well, this is obviously not following the science. You can just simply say, if that's the issue, this is my religion, I'm just following the science.

Okay, why aren't you following the science? I'm just following what seems to be good for human beings, for human flourishing. You have people doing this gender thing. This is not good for them.

And they know it. That's why the suicide rates are so high. It has nothing to do with Christians objecting to the gender issues.

Like, Oh, you Christians are causing people to kill themselves. Look at the Christian voices almost unheard of in our culture right now. And all the rest of the voices are screaming support.

A whole month is dedicated to LGBTQ. And everywhere in society, even our attorney who put together our state, our state plan, right, sends us a letter of June saying how she and their organization is celebrating Pride Month. So it says everybody's celebrating.

And how is it that this little voice of Christians that can't hardly be heard given the din of support for the LGBTQ cause? How is it that we're the ones who are causing all the people to kill themselves? Christians are much more oppressed in our culture and Christians are killing themselves because of that oppression. This is just a, this is a red herring. You know, this is something to draw you off the trail has nothing to do with the issues.

So that's the kind of questions I'd be asking to get on this kind of pushback. You know, who is it then that gets to to to weigh in in public affairs question only non religious people like you. You're the only ones who get to weigh in.

So my vote doesn't count. Is that what you're saying? Well, it is what they're saying implicitly. But there's kind of a hoity-toity way about it.

So there kind of thing, your religion restricts you, not me. Okay. And then you explain with questions, you know, draw it out and try to show that this is this, this turns out to take us nowhere.

One thing you said, Greg, really struck me about, well, actually, all of that. I thought all of that was very good, Greg, but. I was thinking, well, I just one thing.

One thing I hadn't thought about before was, was the idea that they because they're not grounding their morality and anything, they really have no reason to object to your vote

being based on anything because it's all about preference. So if there is a relativistic view of morality, then they have literally no reason to object to what you're saying. So the objection is kind of it's wrong for you to force your morality on me.

That's kind of what you're saying. That's your morality, not mine. But then what is the basis for calling that wrong? That's an imposition of a value system there.

Yeah, there's there's no way to evaluate someone else's morality. So what part of what's going on here is there is an assumption of a neutral worldview. There's an assumption that we have the true neutral worldview and all of these other people have biases towards their religion.

But what they don't realize is they have an actual worldview where they have ideas about the nature of reality that they are acting on. There's no difference between their votes and our votes. We are voting according to what we believe to be true about reality.

If you think we're wrong, that's when you have to engage in conversation and persuasion because that's the nature of living in a republic where you have to get people to agree with you. So everyone is on an even playing field here when it comes to what we're voting for. Now Greg, I agree with you.

The way to go here is to start asking questions. What do you mean exactly? What are you referring to? Are you referring to a specific policy and what is that policy? And then you can actually talk about the policy and I like your idea, Greg, of saying, well, where's the religious part of this? Now, in the case of abortion, clearly everyone thinks we're wrong and that's what we're arguing against. But I actually do think it is a religious idea that everybody is equally valuable and we don't have to earn our value.

Now, fortunately, people agree with that even though they have no basis for agreeing with that so we don't have to make that case. But I do fear that the more secular we move them, farther we move from God, the less we will believe that people have a right to live, that they have equal value. Well, that is expressed in the abortion debate because you have, okay, well, this human being is in utero in the womb.

And that changes everything. Then it's open game on them, basically. Once they're out of the womb, most people, nowadays not all people think now they ought to be protected.

But so a lot of people are taking this abortion rationale further to entail and fantasize more and more are doing that. So, but there are these ways of trying to disqualify our view. And I wanted to point out, notice here, this is a meta observation, the impulse of the opposition to silence opposition.

When I say opposition to me, those who don't agree with you on some of these issues, what is their impulse? Their impulse is to try to silence you. Now, in this case, they seem

to be silencing with a kind of argument. You know, that's your religious view.

You shouldn't be putting your religious view on other people. But what it amounts to is be quiet, be quiet, since all of your views are informed by your religious convictions, you don't have a place at the table. And this is happening more and more and more and not just subtly in our culture.

And this is why I think it's fair for us. We don't want to back down from that. We want to make our case and make our case in non-religious ways.

But I think it's fair to point this out. And that's why I say, well, okay, then which kind of people get to have a voice in our culture? You think some people should be silenced. That's me.

So who do you think should be allowed to participate in the American experiment? And let them answer people who don't what have religion? You know, if it were people who don't have religion that weren't allowed to speak in the American experiment, there would never be any in America at all. As it turns out, I think I cut you off a little earlier. You had more to say so.

That's okay. I think we've covered it. There was one other thing though.

Let's see if I can remember what it is now. Got you on the spot. I just think there's the problem here.

A lot of this goes back to this idea of relativism because you cannot have a rational argument about morality if relativism is true. So if you believe that it's true, all you have is the option to silence people. And so I think that's where this is- It's a power move.

Yes, it is a power move because they, if we all agree that there's an objective morality and we have to argue towards it and we have certain things in the natural world or whatever that we can appeal to, that's one thing. Then you can allow all these voices because you can have confidence that you can draw people to your side. If you think all these religious people, this is just their preference and it's all blind and I have no way to bring them over to my side, well now all you can do is try to shut them up.

And I think that's part of it, but I think part of it also is the idea that because we are, our morality is based on something outside of us and they recognize that, they know they can't persuade us away from that objective standard that we're committed to. So both things are kind of going on here. Well the only, then the only recourse for them is to use power.

Right. Because their persuasion is not going to work, they know that. So we're just going to use a power trip on you and shut you up.

So they think our, our religious views are just preference, whereas they know that we think it's objective and cannot be dissuaded from. And because we're not arguing from the same basic moral principles, it is very difficult to argue with somebody who has such a different worldview. So this is the situation we're in as a culture that this, this kind of a way to have moral discourse in the public square.

It requires a lot of self control and a willingness to listen. So anyway, I think it's, we're just in a very difficult situation in our culture right now. Curiously though, they have a totally different worldview.

I mentioned in the inside out chapter of a street smarts that a rather of the tactics, the 10th anniversary edition of tactics I added this one. Because the fact is even that they are suggesting that you have your religion, I have mine implicit, obviously, is that they're doing, we're doing something wrong. And there is an implicit morality that's being expressed, which as you pointed out, they have no right to as relativists.

But they can't in some sense, they can't speak otherwise because they are human beings, made the image of God. They realize that right and wrong are features of reality. And so now they're trying to impose a morality in a world where they say they don't believe in morality.

And this is a classic suicide circumstance where the argument self-destructs and yet they don't see it. That's part of our job to help them to try to see that. But a lot of times they're not going to listen.

When I hear this first issue, you know, that's your religion, not my religion, blah, blah, blah. Those are the kind of statements that leave us a little flat footed. And we think, okay, now what? And we want to be quick on our feet and we're not exactly sure how to proceed.

And this is why at the end of whenever I give a talk about tactics, my last statement is, when you get in a tough spot, take a tip from Lieutenant Colombo and always ask questions. So you hear something like that, right away, you think, I don't know how to respond to that. You say, I'm not sure what you mean by that.

Explain that to me more. You toss the ball back in their court. When you have a statement like that, there's all kinds of stuff embedded in it, you may not see.

And so you can't see that right away. You ask for more information, you get them to talk more. And then some of these other things are going to come out that will give you more substance.

You'll be thinking, oh, okay, I know where this is going and it gives you something more to work with. So this is why almost as a reflex, when you're stuck, you ask that question. Tell me more.

I'm not clear the significance of what you're saying. Help me to understand that. Something like that.

That will buy you time if nothing else. And if you want to ask us a question, see that transition there? Okay, good. If you want to ask a question, I can't even speak today.

I want to ask us a question. You can send it on X with the hashtag STRS or you can just go to our website. On our website, if you look at the top of our homepage at str.org, you'll see the hashtag STRS podcast page.

Just click on there and you'll find a link. The thing you have to remember is that it should be the link of a tweet, which is 280 characters, which is only a couple of sentences. So keep it short and we will consider it for the show.

This is Amy Hall in great coco for a stand to reason.