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How Does Adding an Adjective to the Word “Justice” Corrupt It?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about why Greg says that adding any adjective to the word “justice” corrupts it, whether a Christian should consider accepting an invitation to join the DEI committee at their workplace, and how a Christian can best serve as a DEI committee member.

* What do you mean when you say, “Whenever you add any adjective to the word ‘justice,’ you corrupt it”?

* Should a Christian consider accepting an invitation to join the DEI committee at their workplace, and how can a Christian best serve as a DEI committee member?

Transcript

(music) You're listening to the #STRask podcast with Amy Hall and Greg Koukl. Welcome. Hey, Amy.

Hey, Greg. Okay, this first question comes from Andrew. Would you please clarify your assertion that whenever you add any adjective to the word justice, you corrupts it.

I love the aphorism, and I think rhetorically it has great explanatory power. I just can't quite succinctly explain why this is true. Well, it's an observation.

It isn't a grammatical rule. Justice is justice. Okay, certain things are due people, and the word justice captures the notion of what is appropriately due people.

Justice when you give people their due. Now, that may be something pleasant or affirmative, or it may be something unpleasant like punishment. Justice works both directions.

It's giving people their due. What is appropriate? It is like rights are a just claim to something. If you say, "I have a right to something," then you are due that thing in virtue of justice.

If, in fact, it is something you actually do. I mean, nowadays people make up rights claims all the time. But the observation is when adjectives are added to it, it takes just the word justice, and it distorts it.

It politicizes it. So you might have social justice. Okay? Then that means this is a Marxist notion that entails that people are poor because they've been oppressed.

So poverty is an example of oppression. Now, I say that's Marxist because in a non-Marxist understanding of economy, it is not oppressive because people don't have money. But in the Marxist view, the poor are oppressed by the rich, and in virtue of the fact that they don't control the means of production, etc.

They're the ones who are working for the, they're the working class that's working for the capitalist, making a profit off of them. And if they're poor, it's because somebody took money that belongs to them. Right? But the Mosaic Law says, "Do not favor the poor in judgment, but act justly." Okay? So justice means to give what is due.

Okay? The Bible doesn't have any sense that if a person is poor, that is in virtue of oppression, it does say to protect the poor from oppression because the poor being poor are easily oppressed. But their poverty isn't an example of oppression. So I just used that as one example, that when you add these adjectives to the word justice, you're really importing a some kind of social/political notion that may end up subverting real justice in the process.

Okay? And so now we have reproductive justice. What does that mean? That means the liberty to kill your unborn children. Is that just? No.

So the word reproductive attitude that phrase justice has now perverted justice, but it makes it sound like it's an act of justice. So this is rhetorical manipulation. And as a generalization, and it's not for me, I think I heard it first from Dennis Prager, as a generalization, whenever you add an adjective to justice, what you're doing is you're perverting it, distorting it by importing some kind of other element that politicizes the notion.

Justice is a word that works just fine all by itself. If somebody is being treated unjustly in virtue of racism, then justice is violated and justice should be restored. Okay, you add racial justice to it.

There's a whole bunch of other baggage that comes with it that may not turn out to be just at all. And so that's the reason for the generalization. I think what's happening here is when you see the word justice combined with another word, as you say, Greg, that signals that justice is being used rhetorically, as you said.

I think that's a simple way to look at it. It's not that adding a word changes it. It's that usually if somebody's adding a word, that signals that they're using the word justice

rhetorically, and how they're using it is to mean something I like, or something I think we should do.

And so what they're doing is they're redefining the word to mean things that are good or things that I like, and they're using the word that has connotations to us as a society since we have this long history of the word justice, and it has good connotations. And then they attach it to another word, and then suddenly we think it kind of baptizes their policy with these good connotations. That's right.

Excellent way of putting it. So that's the problem. Now, the biggest problem with redefining the word justice from being, say, what you're owed, what you've earned, that sort of thing, whether good or bad, what is due.

The problem with redefining that, especially when I think in terms of charity, so when it comes to social justice and the idea of giving to the poor, which is a good thing and something God commands us to do, and it's something we should desire and we should take part in. But is it justice? That's the question. And my problem with saying that that is an example of justice is that we lose the meaning of justice, as you said, Greg.

Now justice is... And your whole is the meaning of charity. And that's exactly my point. Oh, I'm sorry.

No, it's okay. That's exactly my point. I'm glad you're following along here because the problem is once we lose justice, not only do we lose charity, but we lose the gospel.

Because suddenly you don't understand the idea of what you're owed and suddenly you think, well, if I need something, I'm owed that thing. Justice provides me with that thing. Well, how will the gospel make sense in that world? If it's just for God to give us grace because we need it, then where's the gospel? It's gone.

It's not grace. It's not grace anymore. It's obligatory.

So I think it's going to cause all sorts of confusion among Christians. I think it already is causing a lot of confusion. And I think it's going to get worse.

It is principally a tool of manipulation, I think, to take four notions, notions that are completely forward to the concept of justice and use justice, as you pointed out, as a connotation word to ennoble this new idea they have. You use the word baptize perfect. And this happens all the time.

I mean, you go back to the Third Reich and you have the final solution. What's wrong with solutions? In fact, let's get a final solution. So whatever problem that we're trying to solve, we've now solved it for good.

But of course, that's a euphemism for the destruction of every Jew in Europe. Now, they

didn't succeed. They only killed six million of them and six million others, as it turned out.

This is not war dead. These are just executions. But the notion becomes palatable because the way language is used.

Joseph Goebbels was the head of propaganda. And he was very, very clever how he used it. Now, some people resist any connection of anything now with the Third Reich.

And they said, "Well, I know when somebody raises the Third Reich or Hitler, they're losing the argument or they've lost the argument. Wake up. History repeats itself.

And those who don't learn from it are doomed to repeat it once said. We see these patterns in totalitarian governments. And it's not just the Third Reich, but it's also the Soviet Union.

It's also Cambodia under the pulpot, the Khmer Rouge and every other place where totalitarianism reigns. They manipulate language and we better understand how that happens or we're going to be victims of it. And that is what's happening here.

As Christians, we need to respect language and the meaning of language. After all, God has communicated to us with words. That's how he has communicated himself to us.

And words are a tool for understanding truth. And so as Christians, we need to be very careful with how we use words and to avoid euphemisms, to avoid changing definitions of words all the time. Because that's how you get a relativistic understanding of language is how you manipulate people, as you said, Greg.

And unfortunately, in a relativistic society that doesn't value truth, we're in all sorts of dangers. So as Christians, this is something we need to be really careful about. On the ambassador's creed, which I thought I had a copy here somewhere, but it's in the back of the tactics book.

And there is a point there about a good ambassador is careful how he uses language. And he does not use empty rhetoric to make his points. By the way, we don't need that because we have good arguments.

So we don't need to be manipulative in the way we talk in order to get to make our point well. Okay, Greg, let's go on to a question from Michelle, and she asks, should a Christian consider an invitation to join the DEI committee at their workplace? How can a Christian best serve as a DEI committee member? What resistance, if any, should a Christian anticipate as a DEI committee member? Well, DEI stands for diversity, equity, and inclusion. And this is a euphemism for critical race theory.

It's all the same stuff. Okay. And when CRT came on with a force a couple years ago,

there was such a backlash that they abandoned CRT as an acronym and adopted a different acronym, DEI, and, and therefore, they could say, "Hey, school boards, organizations, whatever, completely disingenuously, hey, we're not teaching CRT.

We're teaching diversity, equity, and inclusion." Of course, all of these notions are tied up with the CRT critical race theory or critical theory, which expresses itself in a number of ways, one with regards to race, another with regards to sexuality. They can use this terminology to accomplish the same and that they were with CRT. So this is a shell game.

Okay? It's a slate of hand. Now, what's this is an interesting opportunity because if a person who is a Christian has an opportunity to be on that panel, then they can have a salutary effect on the panel as well. And they can question and challenge these particular things that have proceeded from these concepts like social justice or sexual justice or, you know, a whole host of other things that have nothing to do with anything virtuous at all.

These are, and by the way, was this in a school situation or business? At a workplace. At a workplace. See, this, whether school or workplace, what is going on here is indoctrination according to a political philosophy.

This indoctrination according to a divisive and controversial political philosophy, in some cases, as a condition of keeping your job. And so the Christian could have an impact here, but they can only have an impact by being shrewd in opposing in careful ways, the promotion of these ideas in the workplace. And could argue or contend for the workers.

And there are multitudes of them who do not agree with this stuff and do not want to be indoctrinated by it. Yet are afraid to speak up because their jobs are on the line. And I know what the crowd is going to say, what the rank and file in these meetings and, oh, we're, this is, we're trying to do what's right and to bring people together and all this other doesn't bring people together.

It divides people, makes them angry in a way, but they can't speak about it because they'll be punished. What's, what is that? That's called soft totalitarianism. And the person Michelle, if you read the book, Live Not By Lies by Rod Drir or D. R. E. R. said it.

D. R. E. H. E. R. Yeah. But Live Not By Lies is all you have to remember. And it's an easy title to remember.

It's not long. It's not burdensome, but it really is, will tell you what's going on. And the year before last, so that would be 21.

I wrote a series of articles and solid grounds that are all available that where I talk about these problems, the totalitarianism that is expressed in meetings and enterprises like these. I think she ought to do it. Okay.

But you have to, Michelle, I think you ought to do it, but you have to count the cost. First, you want to get up to speed on what's going on. You want to read Drir's book, Live Not By Lies and there's some other things you might read as well.

Maybe there's some things on our website. I don't know. Amy would know.

But get up to speed on this and then begin to raise questions. Okay. And the questions are going to be something I would suggest.

Why is it appropriate for us as a committee representing the leadership of this country, a company to enforce. A divisive, controversial political ideology as a requirement for people to make a living here. I mean, if you, if you had required them to go to Bible studies, that would be appropriate.

If you require them to go to Maga sessions, make America great again, that wouldn't be appropriate. Is this appropriate? This is a controversial, divisive, political point of view. How is it that this is being enforced in companies and people's livelihood is dependent on them going along with it, giving it the nod and not complaining? Okay.

That's the kind of thing. I mean, this point can be made. Is there does diversity, DEI diversity include diversity of opinions about DEI and other things related to this? And if there, if there, if people do not accept these ideas, are they free to offer another point or will they be punished? And if they're going to be punished, what justifies punishing them? The fact is people are losing their jobs because they're not going along with this.

Hopefully your, your employer, Michelle is hurt. I want us is broad minded enough and enlightened enough that they are willing to entertain contrary views without punishing, but I doubt it. And there's a reason for this that companies are going.

It's, in my opinion, it's all about money. It's it if the, if the culture change, it went in a different direction and it became economically beneficial to be not woke, they're not going to be woke. This is virtue signaling for the sake of profit.

That's why big business is on board with this. These are not conservative notions. Big business used to be quite conservative.

Okay. Big business is based on capitalism, but DEI is an anti-capitalistic enterprise because the East ends for equity, which means everybody ends up the same place. That's Marxist, not capitalist.

To each according to his ability from each, no, to each according to his need and from each according to his ability. That's a Marxist doctrine. You have less, you get more.

You can produce more, you give more. From each according to his ability to each according to his need, we even everything out in the end. That's what equity means.

Just one correction. It's not you give more. It's we take more from you.

No, we take more. That's right. Yeah, we take it.

Yeah. That's the idea. So this is completely counter to big business as a capitalistic enterprise.

Okay. Why are they going along with this? Because it's smart business at the moment. Okay.

So anyway, the other thing I would say, Michelle, is I hope you could get in there and be a, you know, have a salutary impact there by raising these questions. However, keep in mind, you at best probably are going to earn the ire of everyone else on the committee. And at worst, you could lose your job.

So count the cost. Yeah, my advice would be it's great if you do it. But if you're not willing to stand up and stand out and pay attention to the cost.

If you're willing to stand out and be the only one on the side of something, then then don't do it because I think it will only torture you and you'll feel guilty or whatever. You have to be willing. You have to be in the public.

They will do all kinds of things. This is all being done. By the way, you need more than the willingness to stand up and be shot at.

Because they're not going to miss in many cases. I don't know about your employer, Michelle, but this is just the way it works. But if people don't stand up, what's going to stop this flow? And I do not believe the majority of people agree with any of this, but they are being bullied into silence.

Yeah, so if you're in that committee, you're in a position to stand up for the people who actually are being excluded for their viewpoints. And so that's a good place to be, but you have to be willing to do it. I think about a friend of mine.

I'm not even going to say what kind of business he's in. But he was in one of these training DEI seminars, and they asked everybody. And I try to remember exactly what the question was.

It might have been something along the lines of, are you willing to use the pronouns, the preferred pronouns of people? If you are, stand in this corner of the room. If you're not standing in this corner of the room, and he was the only person to go stand in the corner where he was saying, "I'm going to use the actual pronouns, not the preferred pronouns." The only person in the entire seminar. I promise you, though, there's a whole bunch of people in the other group that didn't want to be there, but they're doing it for self-protection.

It's true. And so if you're in this position where you can stand up for those people and give them a voice, then that's fantastic. But I don't think it's going to be easy.

And I don't know how long I could do that. I don't know how long that you'll want to do that. It might be that it'll end up being pointless, but I don't know.

I think it's worth a try. Especially if they're asking you. They're asking her.

They're inviting her to be part of it. And Reed Rogers' book, because the title actually comes from Alexander Soltz-Nitzen, the Soviet dissident who spent 10 years in the Gulag. He's not a Pulitzer, but a Nobel Prize winner for his work, exposing the Russian Gulags and eventually exiled to the United States in 1979.

And he wrote an essay as he was leaving, firing his final shot, and the essay was titled "Live Not By Lies." And there's a cost that's involved. But we, as Christians, his argument, we can't live according to lies. And we can make a difference if we refuse to do so, even though we're small and Big Brother is big.

And that's what we're talking about here, Big Brother. Incidentally, I don't have it in front of me. But you know, the three slogans of the party in 1984 watched over by Big Brother was "Freedom of Slavery, War's Peace," and there was a third one.

I can't remember. But they're opposites. This is what they're... So male is female, okay? That's just one example.

The exact same thing is happening that was described by Orwell in 1984, who wrote in the '30s and was a socialist himself, but he was pillering Soviet-style totalitarianism. And here we see the same patterns here. So, just to sum up, Michelle, we didn't actually talk very much about the ideas behind DEI.

So if any of you have questions about that, I recommend going to Neil Shinvy's website, that's S-H-E-N-V-I. He's an apologist, and he has done a lot of work explaining very clearly what critical theory is. He uses a lot of primary sources, and he has examined a lot of their books and talks and all sorts of things.

So if you want to understand what critical theory is, and why we would be against it? Because it's possible there are people listening who don't even know why we would be against it. Isn't it supposed to help people? Don't Christians want to help people? So you need to understand. And actually, I just heard today that he has a book coming out in October on critical theory.

Okay, great. So... Let me just... We're right at the end of our segment here, but I wanted to add one thing that is part of critical theory that he talks about, and it's called oppression through ideology. And it's something everybody here is completely familiar with, and you're so familiar with it that it doesn't even seem weird anymore.

Oppression used to be when you hurt somebody, or where you denied something that they should get. So you don't let them get an education, or you don't let them right in the front of the brush, or you take something from them that's theirs. You oppress people by hurting them.

Okay, that is all changed. Think of the gender thing. You don't want to go with the wrong with the pronouns.

Okay, you're an oppressor. Why? Because your point of view is oppressing other people. Now it's not actions that oppress.

Now it's ideas that oppress. Even ideas that have really no impact. You know, you want to do what you want to do and be what you want to be.

Go ahead and talk the way you want to talk. Why do I have to talk that way? Because your ideas oppress me. And so now disagreeing is an act of oppression.

You're oppressing people through your contrary ideology. That's nutty. And by the way, it's a one way street.

It doesn't work in both directions, obviously. But we have gotten so used to that. Oh, I don't want, you know, I'm offending.

I'm being intolerant. I'm this, that, the other thing. All you're doing is having a contrary point of view.

And that is being characterized as an act of oppression, which by the way, if it's an act of oppression, it's violence against a person. And that person feels justified then in responding in self-defense with physical violence. That's on Tifa.

And others like them. All right. You started it.

You oppress me with your ideas. That is hurting me. I can defend myself by reacting violently against you.

That's what's going on here. That's oppression through ideology. It's one of the pieces of critical race theory.

It's a radical distortion. It's completely unjust in the classical sense of justice. But it is characterized as justice now because of the adjectives that are added to the word.

All right. Thank you, Andrew and Michelle. We appreciate hearing from you.

Send us your questions on Twitter with the hashtag #STRS or go through our website on our hashtag #STRS podcast page. Thanks for listening. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cocle for Stand to Reason.

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