

Some Honest Questions for Andy Stanley

According to megachurch pastor **Andy Stanley**, if your religious convictions conflict with your ability to serve those you differ with, that's your business, but you should "leave Jesus out of it."

What exactly did he mean by this? And has he thought through the implications of his statement?

Since I have been unable to reach Pastor Stanley directly and since he expressed his views publicly, I want to take this opportunity to raise some questions for him—really, for all of us—to think through carefully.

But first let me give the background to the controversy, which surrounded Kansas House Bill 2453, designed to protect religious individuals, groups or businesses from being penalized for refusal to participate in services related to same-sex marriage.

Although the bill has been dropped from consideration for the moment, many critics have been up in arms about it, comparing the bill to Jim Crow laws. (For a refutation of that complete misrepresentation of the bill, see Ryan T. Anderson's article "'Homosexual Jim Crow Laws'? Get Real.")

One of those critics was Fox News correspondent Kirsten Powers, who wrote that pastor **Andy Stanley** told her that "he finds it 'offensive that Christians would leverage faith to support the Kansas law.' He said, 'Serving people we don't see eye to eye with is the essence of **Christianity**. Jesus died for a world with which he didn't see eye to eye. If a bakery doesn't want to sell its products to a gay couple, it's their business. Literally. But leave Jesus out of it.'"

He further stated, "Jesus taught that if a person is divorced and gets remarried, it's adultery. So if (Christians) don't have a problem doing business with people getting remarried, why refuse to do business with gays and lesbians."

Here are my questions for Pastor Stanley, and I ask these for the purpose of clarification, not as an attack on his faith or his commitment to the Lord:

1. Were you responding to the actual content of the bill, or were you responding to how critics misrepresented the bill? As Ryan Anderson notes, "The bill would protect all citizens from being forced by the government into recognizing or celebrating a same-sex marriage if it ran contrary to their religious beliefs."

So, the issue is not whether a bakery would be willing to sell cookies to a same-sex couple or would "do business with gays and lesbians." The issue is whether the bakers could be punished by the government if they declined to provide a wedding cake for a same-sex ceremony, which would mean inscribing it to "Bob and Bill" and putting two male figurines on top of the cake. Were you aware of this distinction?

2. Why do you find it "offensive" that people of faith also "leverage faith" when it comes to freedoms of conscience, speech and religion? If the government told you that you were required to perform same-sex weddings in your church, would you not "leverage faith" in your response?

3. You stated, "Serving people we don't see eye to eye with is the essence of Christianity," and I absolutely understand the point you are trying to make. But are you telling me that, if I am in the medical supply business and I am asked to supply medical equipment for a late-term abortionist, I should do so, since "serving people we don't see eye to eye with is the essence of Christianity"? Are you saying that it is the "essence of Christianity" to help a late-term abortionist rip

up a baby in the womb?

Are you telling me that if I lived in the days of slavery and I was asked by some slave traders to manufacture shackles for the slaves that I should do so with excellence and diligence, since “serving people we don’t see eye to eye with is the essence of Christianity”?

Is that what you mean? If not, could you clarify what is different between these scenarios and that of a Christian being asked to help facilitate a homosexual marriage, something that our Father clearly abhors?

4. Do you see a difference between Jesus dying for a world “with which He didn’t see eye to eye” and Jesus participating in sin? According to the Scriptures, Jesus didn’t participate in the stoning of the woman caught in adultery—to the contrary, by His words, He stopped it from happening—but He certainly died for those who wanted to stone the adulteress. (He died for her too.)

Can you agree that it is one thing to lay our lives down for our lost friends and neighbors and another thing to participate in their sin? Didn’t Paul tell us directly in Ephesians 5 not to partner with the sons of disobedience in their works of darkness?

5. Is it right for you to tell a Christian company that if they want to act on their convictions, that’s their business, but they should “leave Jesus out of it”? How does a Christian business “leave Jesus out of” their business? How do people who seek to put Jesus first in every area of their lives now leave Him out of their lives when it comes to making important moral and spiritual decisions?

Pastor Stanley, if you were a Christian photographer and a nudist colony asked you to do a photo shoot for their annual volleyball tournament, would you “leave Jesus out of” your decision and just tell them, “I’d rather not”? Or would you

tell them that, as a follower of Jesus, you could not do this in good conscience? Or perhaps you would do the very best photo shoot they've ever had, since "serving people we don't see eye to eye with is the essence of Christianity"? Is that what you mean?

My dear brother, would you please clarify your position? The stakes are very high.

Michael Brown *is author of Hyper-Grace: Exposing the Dangers of the Modern Grace Message and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show The Line of Fire on the Salem Radio Network. He is also president of FIRE School of Ministry and director of the Coalition of Conscience. Follow him at AskDrBrown on Facebook or at @drmichaellbrown on Twitter.*