

Why Is Prayer at School So Threatening to Atheists?

There is an event happening at schools all across the country later this month that, according to the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), people need to be warned about. FFRF admonishes that the event is an “ostentatious display of piety at school.” It “breeds divisiveness and bullying” and can even “build walls between public school students who would otherwise get along.”

What is this “spontaneous eruption of religiosity” that FFRF finds so threatening to students at public schools? **Prayer**—or more specifically, the annual See You at the Pole event.

On Wednesday, millions of students across the globe will participate in **See You at the Pole** by joining together before the beginning of the school day to pray for their friends, families, teachers, school and nations. Gathered around the flagpoles of their elementary, middle and high schools, they will cry out to God for forgiveness, favor and protection for the coming year.

Yet there are many people and groups, like FFRF, that find the peaceful prayers of this gathering of Christian students to be threatening. No one is being forced to participate in the event, nor is it interfering with class time. So what is the threat?

The theme of this year’s See You at the Pole is #IFTHEN. It comes from 2 Chronicles 7:14, which is summarized as, “If we pray, seek, turn; then God hears, forgives, heals.”

To FFRF and groups like it, the threat of **prayer at school** is the “then.” The threat is that when students pray, *then* God responds. If prayer didn’t work, then a group of students gathering around a flagpole early in the morning to talk to

God would pose no threat. If prayer didn't work, then FFRF would not find it "unfortunate" that students are encouraged to "reach out to [their] classmates who do not know God's love and forgiveness."

But *if* prayer really works, *then* that group of students calling out to God around the flagpole becomes a threat to those who deny God's existence or His sovereignty over this world. *If* prayer really works, *then* it is a threat to those who would seek to corrupt a generation of students into embracing a godless worldview. *If* prayer really works, *then* students might turn to God and come to know His love and forgiveness.

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