

Will Religious Liberty Come Up During Tonight's Debate?

Since both candidates in Tuesday night's vice-presidential debate have a record when it comes to religious liberty, you can bet the topic will come up—giving you the opportunity to talk with the people in your life about a deeply important issue.

Unsurprisingly, religious liberty is a tricky topic to navigate because it's personal. People feel strongly about the ability to live life as they want, but some betray the concept of tolerance by crying “intolerant!” if others want to live life through the lens of their faith.

So, how do you talk about religious liberty with someone who thinks the government can force people to violate their beliefs? Here are some guidelines that allow you to tread lightly and expertly discuss the issue without fear and trembling.

Common Ground

We've talked in the past about how common ground is disarming, and we're going to make that case again.

Liberals frequently cry “intolerant!” when conservatives start to talk about religious liberty. Don't let them.

Though it's become a dirty word, tolerance is important—we should be able to disagree with each other and then live side-by-side in peace. Tolerance doesn't mean defeat, but it does require kindness and respect from both parties.

Acknowledging the common ground of tolerance creates a safe space to examine, discuss and disagree. And addressing the elephant in the room—“We disagree on this issue, but it's OK.

I'll maybe kinda sorta still like you when this is over. Now let's talk about it"—frees you up to make your case and rightly frames your motivation.

The liberal on the other side of the conversation can't claim you're intolerant if you just said you believe we should be able to disagree, discuss and then live in peace side-by-side.

Goodbye argument of intolerance. Hello civil discussion.

Examples

Unfortunately, there are numerous examples of folks trying to run businesses, practice medicine or simply move up the corporate ladder but have been punished for not wanting to violate their beliefs.

Here is the latest from *The Daily Signal* on the Oregon bakers who refused to bake a wedding cake for a same-sex ceremony in January 2013. Nearly four years later, the bakery is closed and the case is still moving through the court system (think of those hefty legal bills).

This article explains why a 70-year-old florist is facing seven figures in legal fees for refusing to make flower arrangements for a same-sex wedding.

Illinois signed into law a bill that forces doctors to tell their patients about the benefits of abortion and refer them to abortion providers, even if the doctor is pro-life.

These are powerful examples to use when arguing for religious liberty. Not only do you have plenty to choose from, but the person you're talking to will more quickly recognize the person you're defending.

Words

Be inclusive. Don't point fingers. Go on offense, not defense.

When you talk about religious liberty, you're not only making a case for your beliefs, but also for the beliefs of those you disagree with. If you're going to argue for tolerance, that means both sides are able to live and let live. So come at this conversation with an attitude of "I care deeply about my beliefs, but also about yours."

Words and phrases like "tolerance," "live and let live," and "no one should be forced by government" go a long way in illustrating what we have in common despite party affiliation—that this country was founded so that people could live free from burdensome government interference.

Here's hoping you're able to make a case for religious liberty that emphasizes its importance for both sides. Religious liberty doesn't just protect those who identify as "religious," it also benefits those that don't. It's an argument for all, and that's an easy argument to make.

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