

Why Are So Many Kids Being Told Public Prayer Is Against the Law?

Prayer is important at Florida's Cambridge Christian School.

"We train our students that prayer is foundational to their walk with Christ," Head of School Tim Euler told me. "Our faith is founded in prayer."

So when Cambridge Christian faced off against University Christian School last December in the 2A state championship football game, they asked the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) if they could begin with a word of prayer.

The FHSAA said no.

They told both Christian schools that offering a pre-game prayer was against the law—that it could be viewed as an endorsement of religion since the schools would be praying on government property.

"This is ridiculous," said Jeremy Dys, an attorney with Liberty Institute. "We've got two Christian schools being told they can't pray."

Liberty Institute, a law firm that specializes in religious liberty issues, is representing Cambridge Christian.

Dys said the FHSAA broke the law when they forbade the Christian schools from praying last December at the Citrus Bowl.

"We have the state trying to impose strictures upon the church," he told me. "I think we've gone a long way away from who we are as a country when the state starts telling Christian schools they can no longer pray in public."

Liberty Institute sent a demand letter to the FHSAA demanding a written apology for what they call a “gross violation” of the law. Should they fail to do so, the law firm has threatened to file a federal lawsuit.

The FHSAA has yet to respond to their demands.

The prayer ban disturbed not only the administration but also the football team.

Jacob Enns, the team’s 17-year-old kicker, told me the prayer is extremely important.

“It’s something we did before every game this season,” he said. “It’s been our tradition ever since I’ve been on the team, and our tradition was ruined. It made me wonder, is it wrong to pray?”

Still, the team gathered on the field and recited “The Lord’s Prayer” before the game—and some spectators joined in.

“Prayer is something we’ve been taught to do and to do no matter what—even in public,” Jacob told me.

For Cambridge Christian, prayer is a means to glorify God in all that it does—including on the gridiron.

“We are raising godly young men that can make a difference in the world they live in,” head coach Bob Dare said. “This is why CCS is so committed to praying before every home football game.”

It serves as a reminder to the young men on the field, Euler said.

“Football is great, but in reality their walk with Jesus and prayer is vitally more important,” he said.