

How to Respond When Your Faith Is Mocked

Saturday Night Live launched the careers of some of America's best-known comedians, including Steve Martin, Ben Stiller, Eddie Murphy, Billy Crystal, Chevy Chase, John Belushi, Will Ferrell and—more recently—Amy Poehler, Tina Fey and Kristen Wiig. But Christians across the country were not amused last weekend when the comedy show aired a skit spoofing the new film *God's Not Dead 2*.

For many of us, SNL and broadcaster NBC crossed a line. The skit, which mocked traditional Christian values by claiming that “God is gay,” had a sarcastic tone that was meant to demean people of faith. Veteran actor Pat Boone, who has a minor role in *God's Not Dead 2*, told *The Hollywood Reporter* this week that the SNL skit was “outright sacrilege.”

“Satan ridicules faith, and they are taking Satan's side,” Boone said of the show's producers.

And while the SNL skit characterized Christians as bigots, it was itself a blatant form of bigotry. The show's producers may think Christians are hypocrites because we hold conservative views on marriage, but denigrating an entire faith community is hypocritical, too.

The definition of mock is “to tease or laugh at in a scornful or contemptuous manner.” Sorry, SNL, but Pat Boone isn't the only guy who's not laughing at this crude joke. A lot of people in this country don't think SNL is funny anymore.

I'm not going to launch a boycott of NBC or call for protests in front of the show's studios in New York. Instead, I'm going to do what Jesus told us to do when people ridicule our faith. Here are three simple guidelines the New Testament gives us:

1. Don't get defensive. We should not be shocked when non-Christians mock our beliefs. Jesus was mocked when He was crucified, and He told us that people would hate us because we follow Him. This is the high cost of being a disciple. When we embrace Christianity, we give up the hope of being popular. I don't live for the world's approval, and it's crazy to expect people who have not had a personal encounter with Christ to respect my faith or applaud my morality.

Second Peter 3:3 says in the last days, "mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts." A common characteristic of this fallen world is mockery. Unbelievers sometimes mock God, take His name in vain, attack the Bible, make fun of churches and ridicule anyone who follows Jesus. Persecution should never come as a surprise to you. Don't be shocked when it happens! Paul wrote: "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

2. Never lash out in anger. In this world of social media outrage and shout-a-thon talk shows, we Christians think we have the right to jump in the ring and scream like everyone else to prove our point. But that wasn't Jesus' strategy when He was arrested, stripped naked, scourged and interrogated. When Jesus was being reviled, 1 Peter 2:23 says, "He did not revile back; when He suffered, He did not threaten."

Jesus either answered plainly or kept His mouth shut. He trusted the Father to vindicate Him. If you are mocked for your faith, keep your cool and bite your lip. Don't let angry people push your button. God will give you wise words to say if you let His love control your tongue.

3. Pray for your enemies. Jesus said it best in Matthew 5:43-44: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and

persecute you.” How many of us actually obey that commandment?

Before you speak with a local abortionist, a gay activist or an atheist professor, adjust your heart before God. Jesus said we must (1) love those who attack us and (2) pray for them. Praying for those who are hostile to your beliefs will enable you see them from God’s perspective. He loves people—even those who mock Him. So should we. After you’ve corrected your attitude, you are more likely to say words that are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

I’ve been mocked for my Christian faith many times over the years. I’ve been called narrow-minded, fanatical, judgmental, Puritanical, Medieval, homophobic, Neanderthal and several choice words I can’t print here. I don’t hate the people who said those things. Instead, I pray they will discover the same mercy I found in Christ—and I pray they find it before they face Him when this life is over. {eoa}