

When disagreement becomes name-calling

by using absolute language to refute absolutes.



How to respond to those who use absolutes to refute absolutes

Washington Times By Everett Piper 7-15-19

Standard fair for any conservative Christian who dares to open his mouth in the public square today is to be called a “bigot,” a “hater” and an “intolerant SOB” for doing so. My experience is no exception. Predictable responses to my weekly columns often include comments such as, “You’re an idiot. You are a hateful crank. You are an embarrassment to our community. You’re arrogant. You

always think that you’re right. The real enemy of truth is people like you who want to impose your ‘truth’ on the rest of us.”

My recent response to one of these modern-day exemplars of tolerance might be instructive, or, at the very least, a bit entertaining: Dear Mr. Inclusive, I want to be clear that everything I am about to say is a critique of your ideas and not an attack of you as a person. It is important that we remember that disagreement should never devolve into name calling. Such emotional tactics only serve to make the attacker feel superior at the expense of his victims. We all should condemn such gamesmanship. The best way to debate is to stay focused on ideas and their consequences and flee any temptation to be rude or demeaning toward those with whom we might disagree.

So, within these ground rules, I offer the following.

First, you argue that those who claim there are objective truths are arrogant and the “real enemies of truth.” I can’t help but ask you a question or two. Doesn’t your comment clearly indicate you believe you are right and that I am wrong? Doesn’t your own logic assume there is some sort of objective standard that justifies your condemnation of those who defend objective standards? Aren’t you postulating your own truth as you ridicule others for believing in truth?

The bottom line here is this: Your presupposition that you are absolutely right in saying absolutists are absolutely wrong for believing in absolutes is self-refuting. It is as if you are saying that you can’t tolerate the intolerant, or you’re sure that nothing is sure, or that you hate those hateful people, or that you are righteous for being indignant toward the indignation of the righteous. Do you see the problem here? I feel like I am watching a dog chase its tail. At every turn you are inadvertently affirming the case for absolutes by using absolute language to refute absolutes.

Second, I just can’t help but comment on the implicit confidence you have in your position. You say “The problem with Christians is that we are arrogant and always think we are right.” Now, I don’t begrudge you the strength of your conviction. In fact, any argument would have little authority or purpose if it didn’t presuppose some degree of veracity higher than and better than that to which it is juxtaposed. But, while I sincerely admire your backbone, I can’t help but point out a problem imbedded just under the surface of your self-assurance.

You see, here again, your passion to expose the wrongness of someone else’s thinking simply cannot stand unless the rightness of your own thinking prevails. In other words, what you are basically saying is, you are right in criticizing anyone who thinks they are right and by doing so, you, by default, have joined the ranks of those you accuse. Your only other position would be to say that you are wrong in condemning me for thinking I am right, but I don’t think you want to go there.

Finally, if believing in absolute truth is arrogant; if all ideas are equal; if it really doesn’t matter what you believe as long as it works for you; if there are no “self-evident truths” and if there is no absolute moral standard, then at the end of the day, who is going to determine who’s right and

who's going to decide who's wrong concerning some of the key questions of our time; questions on matters such as climate policy, border security, sexual identity, religious freedom, gun rights, health care, and abortion?

If there is no truth to judge these important debates, then what is left as the final judge? The answer can only be one thing — political power.

Are okay with this?

If your answer is yes, I think we need to go back to your original point where you bemoan those who “impose truth on all the rest of us,” for, your position leaves nothing but imposition as the basis for your condemnation of someone else's impositions.

As David Horowitz tells us in his book, “Left Illusions,” when we forfeit the absolutes afforded to us by the boundaries of Truth we lose all objective measures of what is right and what is wrong and we, then, suffer the inevitable consequence of being subject to the “rule of the gang” as the final authority. And, history tells us that if you want to be free, the “gang” is not an arbiter to be trusted.

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