

HOW YOU RESPECT BELIEFS

respecting beliefs

Some people say we must have our beliefs and let nobody else change them. Nobody else can change them. Only we can do that. Even if we are brainwashed at some point we let it happen to us. Their saying is really the notorious, "I have a right to my opinion." That is actually a discussion-stopper. It's intolerant of future discussion and therefore rude. Avoid it. Sincerely say, "Thank you for what you said. I will think about it."

Some say that they do not accept your beliefs or opinions but respect them.

Can you really respect what you consider to be wrong? You don't respect the beliefs of Jack the Ripper that it is a good work to kill prostitutes.

Some amend the claim to say that they respect beliefs and opinions contrary to their own but only if the beliefs and opinions do not interfere with the rights of others.

Respecting or celebrating one's right to a belief or opinion is not the same as respecting the belief or opinion itself. Thus I will have the right to scorn and disrespect your beliefs and opinions if I think they are ridiculous or dangerous. But I will still stand for your right to accept them.

It is said that I can stand up for a person's right to believe in racism but I will ridicule their belief and I will stop them exercising or carrying out that belief in a practical sense. For example, if they start putting up "Blacks out" posters. But if it is fair to stand up for people being wrong then why not encourage them to be wrong? The proper view is, "Nobody has the right to believe in racism. But apart from talking to them, it makes no sense to try and stop them being racist. We tolerate their beliefs for we cannot stop them having them." Why give somebody a right or permission to think what they like? Whether you do or don't will make no difference. Giving permission to believe in racism is against your own right to refuse to have anything to do with racism. Giving permission says something about you.

A belief can only be respected if the evidence and proofs for it are very good or sufficient. The opinion supported by the best assessment of evidence is the opinion that deserves the most respect.

The person who says they respect a belief they do not respect at all is being a hypocrite and acting ignobly. Far better to admit they do not respect it and guard each person's right to a belief they disrespect.

Though we might say that people have the right to ask you to believe something we mean this loosely. Strictly speaking, nobody has the right to ask you to believe anything. What they have is the right to empower you to help yourself to believe.

Respecting a person's religious belief or religion raises the question, "Do they really have religious belief?" Debate and integrity are vital but the problem with people of faith is that often they mistake the brainwashing they got as children and force of habit for faith. I think there are less people of faith in religion and among its leadership that you would realise. If faith is good then what passes largely for faith certainly is not. Real believers would see God as a God of evidence and respect evidence so much that if it led them to atheism or another religion they would comply. Belief should not be equated with closed mindedness. Religion concentrates so much on indoctrinating children that it seems that this is not really about instilling faith but making the children think they have faith and to keep them trapped for life.

FINALLY

Truth is not about us. We all have to try and line up to the truth and have the guts to face it if we do not like it. People protecting us from the truth is patronising and lazy for they should be offering support as we face it. And surely they wonder what others are hiding from them! Respect belief by challenging it but respect truth more. If you do not respect truth you cannot truly respect belief either.

Belief is relative to alternatives. That is to say that to accept x is to challenge anything that contradicts x or seems to contradict x. That is why people hate being disagreed with. That is when respect becomes difficult.

Respect for belief is good but only if you know your guidelines.

If it is of supreme importance to respect religion then that entitles you or commands you to NOT respect what looks like

religion or faith but which is not. In fact, it would demand you challenge somebody who seems to be using a religious figure for their own ends (eg politicians like Donald Trump) or who uses a faith to change society's opinion (eg an LGBT activist who is always at Mass).

Do not attack the person but challenge the belief. To encourage the person to rethink the belief is not attacking the person at all. The person is not the belief. They may however be insulted at you attacking the object of the belief. If the object is God or Jesus or Muhammad there is going to be a problem. Suggest that these entities would not want you to be believing errors about them.

Identify differences between what you know and believe and what the person believes. Compare.

Be aware that there are three forms disagreement can take

---There can be a disagreement or contradiction over matters of fact. Did it rain this morning or not? One says one thing and the other says another.

---There can be disagreement over belief with regard to what the evidence actually indicates.

---There can be disagreement over values and matters of taste. Not all values are simply a matter of taste.

Do not mix up belief and action. A man may believe God calls him to have ten wives but that does not mean you go and help him to get them. Respect for belief and refusing to respect the consequences of a belief are two separate issues.

Those who want their beliefs respected are really seeking to get the consequences protected.

RELIGIOUS LOVE

Love the sinner and hate the sin is the core of what Christianity is about for its ideas about God make no sense without it. It says we sin which means God hates us if loving sinners is impossible. That would refute creation by God for God would not create beings to hate out of nothing. So love the sinner and hate the sin is not a doctrine but a colossus. That is why no doctrine gives us more right in principle to criticise religion. If you can love the sinner and hate the sin or respect the sinner and disrespect the sin then I can love/respect the believer and hate/disrespect the belief. So I should be allowed to. Try something different. If you preach love the sinner and hate the sin or respect the sinner and disrespect the sin then let me preach that I can love/respect the believer and hate/disrespect the belief. A believer has no right at all to shut up an atheist, critic or a sceptic or to condemn them for criticism.

FINALLY

Ridiculous ideas mock themselves. Humour and jokes can convey that best. Wanton mockery is not the best way and the objective is to bring light to society. Try this approach, "I am not interested in what you believe but in how and why you believe it."