

## **Morals Paper: Why I refer to Jesus in Politics - By Harry Briley 7/1998**

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### **Background Bias**

When Christians talk about moral issues, we must define our bias to lay the groundwork as to why some moral issues are important to significant numbers of Californians.

We follow a traditional Judeo-Christian position and come to the political table with that bias open and above board. This does not mean that only Christians or Jewish people hold these moral positions. [Indeed, there is debate about what constitutes civil morals between the progressive and traditional branches within those communities.]

Many conservative Californians hold to our traditional moral positions for pragmatic, cultural, economic, or other personal reasons. If you are going our way, even if not for faith reasons, lend us your shoulder for the societal stability of all Californians.

Traditional Christianity and Judaism base civil and societal mores on premises laid out in the ancient text called the Torah. Called 'The Law' but more accurately called 'The Teachings', the Torah consist of the first five books attributed to Moses. It gives us insight to the mind of God regarding human behavior.

While America is not a theocracy envisioned by Moses, such moral principles carried forward over millenniums into the founding of America up through the 1850's. With the advent of Darwinism, the population treated the Bible (and especially the Torah portion) as irrelevant in public debate. Now, after a century of social engineering, moral absolutes are virtually unknown within our legal code except by morally conservative legislators.

Christian churches for 2000 years examined the morality of human behavior by repeatedly hammering out their core understandings of the Bible. The imprint has been so strong that regardless of denomination, a common historical moral root appears in creeds, dogmas, church standards, and Western Civilization legal processes.

The bottom line is that faith in touch with the supernatural has had a profound impact upon the natural. The faith-based premise is that a singular God exists and that he rewards those who diligently seek him. If this premise has no intrinsic merit, it would have died out during or prior to the Roman Empire.

If God is the source of all things, it follows that we have an authority over us that transcends human government. This is why Thomas Jefferson in drafting the Declaration of Independence specified a Creator God granting unalienable rights. The concept of limiting the powers of human government and monarchs is firmly rooted in the Judeo-Christian concept of a singular God who requires governmental leaders to lead or rule according to his higher standards of justice, mercy, and humility.

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### **So what is the deal about Jesus?**

Jesus was a Jewish teacher around 30AD who firmly believed the Torah and made those ancient teachings harder to swallow than the Jewish legal scholars for centuries originally considered. Refer to the book of Matthew (chapter 5). He took the Ten Commandments that Moses introduced and applied them at the heart level beyond the legal veneer. For example, while Moses treated adultery as a fatal infraction with God, Jesus said that even gazing at a woman with sexual desire counted as adultery.

This applies directly to the flood of pornography on the Internet and common porn found in magazines and videos. Jesus was not a prudish legalist in a backwards society. He was well familiar with the negative impact of Greek cultural mores upon the Jewish community in both rural and urban environments. He knew men's wiring for visual input and that saving sexual relationships for marriage started with the gray matter between our ears. Ask any married woman whose husband has a wandering eye. This area of adultery was just one of several behaviors that he amplified.

Christian churches carried forward the essence that a moral code affected not only individuals but also the betterment of civilization when some aspects of human behavior were widely marked as unacceptable.

These early believers immediately saw the negative effects of making up one's own moral rules within the Greek and Roman towns of the Christian era. The excesses in alcohol, drugs, sexual proclivities, infanticide, violence, child abuse, break-ups of marriages, and the like are not modern ills. These old issues merely resurfaced in larger quantities and more accessible now than in previous generations. The believers noted positive change occurred within people-groups that adopted the words of Jesus in daily practice

Therefore, we openly refer to our own Judeo-Christian bias in our position papers.

Faith in Jesus requires an ongoing relationship with God. As follows, we next introduce this amazing relational aspect of Christianity.

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### What exactly do we mean by "relationship"?

The following notations are a leap of faith and appear unsubstantiated. This paper is not a proof of these statements. Rather, the following lines act as pointers for your further research. We are not elitists. We are beggars who found a vast storehouse of wholesome bread and are passing the word on the street. Until you taste and see for yourself, we will seem to be talking nonsense. We urge you to do the necessary research.

- God is the source of all things and rewards those who diligently seek him.
  - Thus, there is a moral authority outside of our own relative situations.
  - On balance, we believe that God is overly patient in his authority.
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- Compared to God, we simply do not measure up. We call this fatal flaw 'sin'.
  - Thus, our best intentions are woefully inadequate to link up with God.
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- As Christians, Jesus is the Christ/Messiah, and in himself, the only way to God.
  - This complex issue offends everybody who disagrees with Christianity.
  - Jesus (Y'Shua) is the Jewish Messiah foretold in Hebrew Scriptures.
  - This Jesus stuff is your trust that we really did find good bread.
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- The demand to crucify Jesus stemmed from his making himself out to be God.
  - Death on a Roman cross was the worst thing to do to a Jewish person
  - Jesus described his death as substitution payment for our sins following the principle of a centuries-old sacrificial death of the Passover Lambs.
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- Reliable witnesses and evidences claim that Jesus rose from the dead after 3 days.
  - If left in the grave, he would have been a deluded but proven blasphemer.
  - This singular event galvanized his Jewish followers as proof that he has the authority to forgive sin, then and now.
  - God offers eternal life to whoever willingly accepts Jesus as Forgiver.
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- Early believers acted on this newfound faith by living lives that emulated Jesus.
  - Jesus said those who publicly declared allegiance to him, He would declare as righteous (forgiven) to God.
  - We would be foolish to believe we can do this on our own power.
  - God offers himself through his Holy Spirit to enable us to live thusly
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- Today, we begin this faith journey the same way as those early Jewish believers.
  - If we claim allegiance to Jesus and believe at heart-level that God raised him from death, then we have begun ... and without shame.
  - From our personal experiences, this is the best decision we have made.

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With the extremely limited assertions provided, would you be willing to trust that Jesus is, in his own words, "... *the bread that comes down from heaven, the bread of life*"?

If today is your moment in time, talk to God aloud, perhaps using words like these. Do not worry about being word perfect, he is more interested in attitudes and intentions.

*Dear God: Thank you for your offer of eternal life and canceling the sins that keeps me from you. I accept your offer. I deeply regret my past sins and I ask that you forgive me because of Jesus. I believe that Jesus not only died on the cross because of my sins, but also rose from death to forgive me. I place my complete trust and even my life into your capable hands. Please make me the kind of person that you want me to be.*

Prayer is talking to God. It feels odd when people are within earshot. If this prayer expressed your intentions and you spoke plainly, God has indeed heard you. Consider this paper as merely making an introduction. To go forward on your faith journey with Jesus, follow the examples of the early believers:

- Talk with God about everything and anything
- Commit yourself to learn about Jesus and what he said
- Read about Jesus (See: John, Matthew, Philippians, Romans, Hebrews)
- Read about the heart of God (See: Proverbs, Psalms, Exodus)
- Tell someone else by text, e-mail, or in person about your decision
- Attend a gathering of believers (called a 'church') that highly regards the Bible
- Join a small group Bible study even though you do not have all the answers

Reader's Caution: While millions of people have made such a decision, each person brings along their own personality, warts, and self-centered baggage. We must individually daily ask Jesus to enable us to love God with all our heart, all our mind, and with all our strength ... and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus said these two greatest commandments support the intent of the Torah. With God's help, we each have a long ways to go just to scratch the surface of those two 'simple' commandments.

In our observation of the 200 years of the American Experiment, our culture needs a significant revitalization of traditional Judeo-Christian morals, one individual at a time. Hence, that motivated our offering of this paper towards that morally healthy end.