

Is your religion LOVE?

The world might perceive me as being somewhat of a weird egg, but I guess it's all due to the fact that I am, at the core of my being, a fairly analytical person and I think very logically... most of the time.

Since I have degrees in physics and engineering technology, along with having done computer programming for 18 years, it is very natural for me to quickly analyze situations and in particular to determine if there are potential problems with whatever is being considered. I especially had to do that with programming. In fact, one of the first things I would do once a client told me exactly what they needed the new software program to accomplish, was to figure out why developing what they wanted might not be possible. You don't want to figure that out after you're well into the project. That's a bad thing.



So, what does any of that have to do with this month's question? I often see things around me, and I evaluate them from a very rational, logical point of view. It occasionally puts me in a position of wanting to get into conversations with people when I know they are probably not interested and would wish that I would just mind my own business.

However, when someone chooses to do something such as put a bumper sticker on their car or wear a message-bearing t-shirt, I can't help but think it must really mean something to them or they probably wouldn't go out of their way to have it on their car or wear it out in public. Now, if someone has a shirt that says "Nike" on it, I'm not going to assume they are obsessed with that brand and love to talk to anyone they can about their passion for that company.

Years ago, I found out a co-worker of mine had a "Darwin fish" bumper sticker on his car. I had seen it in the parking lot for months but never knew it was his car. I couldn't wait to ask him about it. I honestly had no intention of luring him into a debate or even saying too much about what I believe. I was primarily interested in what prompted him to put it on his car and why he was such a strong believer in evolution. I really just wanted to learn better where he was coming from. The day I found out it belonged to him, I walked into his office and told him that I noticed his Darwin fish and was curious as to what led him to place it on his car. His answer... he just thought it was "cool". He knew I was a creationist, and he didn't want to talk about it at all. He wasn't offended or being unfriendly. He simply had no defense for what he believed (and what he was promoting). I just let it go and said that if he ever wanted to talk about it, I would be more than willing to have a relaxed conversation with him.



Question of the Month

One more example (the one that prompted me to write this article). Just yesterday, I was working out at the health club and saw an older lady wearing a shirt that said:

Birthplace: Earth
Race: Human
Politics: Freedom
Religion: Love



I've matured over the years, so my first response (internally) wasn't to be overly analytical of its statements or judgmental of her for wearing it. I did, however, think through what the message was apparently trying to convey. I think most people who do something similar to this (wearing a shirt conveying some sort of philosophical belief) do so very sincerely. The problem generally is that most of them have not really thought things through very deeply, and these beliefs quickly fall apart, no matter how well-intentioned they may be.

I'm not going to spend too much time analyzing every line on this shirt. Just one for now... "Religion: Love."

What is "love"? That's certainly a very important question if it's going to be your religion. Many would answer that question by saying something like, "Love is being kind to everyone." Alright. Is it "kind" to let people make their own choices, or should we make their choices for them? It is quite obvious that saying either "we should" or "we shouldn't" make their choices for them leads to serious issues. If you say "we shouldn't" (i.e. giving people freedom to do what they want), that leads to allowing a lot of bad things to happen, and it certainly isn't loving to allow all those hurtful actions. If you say "we should" make choices for others, you are being controlling, and it wouldn't seem loving not to let people decide for themselves. And who would be making those choices for others? The person wearing the shirt? If so, they are not being loving, they are being selfish and controlling. But if it's someone else making the decisions, then who? Who chooses that person? And how do you define "being kind" anyway? Whose standard are we using? You can see that this all turns into a "can of worms" very quickly.

Oh, but it sounds so nice to say that "your religion is love" ... as long as you don't really think about what that actually means or try to act upon it.

I certainly can't say for sure, but most likely, had I approached this woman to ask about the meaning of her shirt, she would not have wanted to discuss it in any real depth and may have been put-off that I was taking it so seriously. My thoughts are, if you believe in it, you should be more than willing to talk about it (and even be excited for those opportunities). If you don't believe it, then why would you bother wearing it in public, giving the impression that it really means something to you. And why would you be surprised or offended when people assume you do care?

Question of the Month

The primary reason I even brought any of this up, wasn't so much for the lesson in analyzing philosophical statements, but as an encouragement to you, to take advantage of various opportunities that present themselves almost every day, all around you. You could try approaching someone by saying, "So tell me more about that interesting shirt you are wearing" and allow the Holy Spirit to direct the next steps, including giving you the words to say and the grace needed as God sees fit. Just be willing to be used, anytime, anywhere.

In the meantime, if you have any questions about this or any other issue, please don't hesitate to [contact us!](#)