

# Joel Osteen and the Lack of Argument Construction in Religious Moral Conversations

The other night after watching [Joel Osteen on CNN's Piers Morgan](#), I was deeply disturbed to hear his response on homosexuality. It was not merely the issue or his belief about it, but it was more importantly his reason for why he refuses to change his mind about his belief. When asked by Piers Morgan about what Osteen's view has been since the recent endorsement of same sex marriage and other political success' of homosexuals, Osteen responded: "It never really changes because mine's is based out of the Scripture. That's what I believe that the Scripture says. That homosexuality is a sin. You know I believed it before and I still believe it now".

All religions are based on sacred texts that many religious adherents believe in. Those religious texts serve as an object of revealed divine knowledge, moral codes that instruct humankind, and information about their God. It is these scriptures that adherents not only read, but believe in and live their lives by. But I believe that something this important and pervasive should at least have meaning behind its mystery and far deeper, reflective reasons other than "because God said so" or "its in the Bible."

Now we can start another discussion about the hermeneutics of scripture, redactor errors in ancient texts, the ancient cultural context of scripture, and even the "Did God really say that?" conversation, but my focus is on another important issue. I am more concerned about the fallacy of "The bible/God says says so Circular Reasoning" that is so easily and confidently rolling off of the tongue of influential religious believers engaged in Christian moral conversations today.

What we call sin is sin for a reason. I believe it's important to share those reasons as we dissect and discuss the ethical implications and relevancy of actions today. The 10 commandments have a strong ethical foundation whose arguments are rich with justifications for its use to God and society even today. But are those other "sins" in the bible: The shellfish, menstrual cycle separations, clothing fiber passages and even homosexuality still "sin"? What strong justifications and ethical relevancies do they hold today to justify as wrong, sin and moral impermissible? Let that discussion begin instead of just relegating them to simple categories of morality wrapped with the ribbon of God said it.

Have we really abandoned our use of reason, knowledge, reflection and common sense

for a mere non-thinking obedient religion? As a theists and more specifically an ordained minister and Philosophy Professor who is dedicated to not only having faith, but mixing that faith with reason, I refuse to accept any directive of living just because someone says so. Let's not forget African Americans were enslaved, women oppressed, the poor suppressed, wars declared and colonized nations overpowered because of these popular fundamentalist responses.

What Joel Osteen's comments teaches viewers and particular religious viewers is that it is OK to not have a reasons for our beliefs beside the fallacious arguments of appealing to tradition, authority and popularity of Scripture. It teaches that we should not have a true argument that support our beliefs but rather a "God says it and that settles it" rhetoric.

Have we become slaves to dogma? Are we servants of historical doctrine and interpretation? Or are we followers of revelation that is not only powerful but make sense. And if it does, then believers should be able to explain why as opposed to relying on fallacies to satisfy as revelatory answers to very fundamental questions about our world. What ever happened to the Augustines, Kaalams, Anslems, Maimonides or Aquinas' of our day? These were humans who were harmed with arguments about their beliefs. Are there any believers who use their mind anymore instead of fallacious scripts alluding to only God's authority?

As we answer the moral problems of our day we are faced with the Euthyphro Delimma that Socrates addressed in his last Dialogues. Are the ethics that we live by right or holy because God said so or is God saying it because it is right and there are reasons for it? In other words is there something good or bad about the act and that is the reason why God suggest we live by it or does God simply pick and choose what he wants us to do despite its intrinsic nature?

I chose to believe in the former. God doesn't just tell us what to do because he feels like it. Things are right or wrong within themselves and there are reasons for why they are. That's why God will either love or reject an act, it is because there are reasons for them. And if he is not only omniscient but also perfect and good, he will have good, strong reasons for doing so. Perhaps reasons that will blow the strongest Ethicist away. And he will also provide us with these reasons as well and not just hide them from us in a heavenly attic of mystery and fundamentalism.

I prefer to believe that there are things that are intrinsically right and wrong in this

world and they are for good reasons. And I am interested in hearing those reasons when other people make moral claims. I am also interested in critiquing those reasons for validity and truth. That's the fun component of being a believer with faith and understanding.

I prefer to follow and reject such right and wrong based on such reasons and I believe God instructs his followers on these right and wrong claims based on logical reasons and not for mere power trip declarations. So if God really said it, he must have reasons for it. So let's us hear them.

The next time someone quotes scripture commands, please hold them to the standard of providing reasons for them. If not, call me a heretic, but without those reasons, either, God got it wrong or the people who writes and speaks on behalf of God sure did.