

## Rights and Responsibility

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... While trolling through [Facebook](#) earlier - I run across [this article](#) regarding today's decision by the US Supreme Court regarding a lawsuit that was brought against the Westboro Baptist Church by the father of a Marine that was killed while serving his country.

The US Supreme court, in their infinite wisdom regarding all things Constitutional, has decided that this "church" is protected - under the First Amendment - in their verbally abusive and hate-mongering protests at military funerals across our country.

As Lee Ross, a reporter for Fox News, said, "A majority of justices ruled that these fundamental rights outweigh the concerns of grieving family members who would rather not deal with what they say are obnoxious protesters from the Kansas church."

{Excerpt from the Fox News Article} "Speech is powerful. It can stir people to action, move them to tears of both joy and sorrow, and -- as it did here -- inflict great pain," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in his majority opinion. "On the facts before us, we cannot react to that pain by punishing the speaker. As a nation we have chosen a different course -- to protect even hurtful speech on public issues to ensure that we do not stifle public debate." {End of Excerpt}

So, now we have added a new meaning to the term "paying the ultimate price" when it comes to our men and women serving in the military. This term USED to mean that they gave their life in service to this country. NOW it ALSO means that - after they have given their lives - they also get to sacrifice their dignity and the dignity of their family/friends/others in an effort to "protect the rights" of these hate mongering folks.

I call them "folks" - because there is no way I can, in good conscience, call them Christians.

Just because you stand in the garage and call yourself a car, doesn't make you a car - any more than attending a church makes you a Christian.

As my Aunt used to say, "Just because a cat has kittens in the oven - doesn't make 'em biscuits."

The ecumenical definition of "Christian" is "a follower of Jesus the Christ and his teachings". Let us see if the Westboro folks meet that criteria...

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 Matthew Chapter 5:3-11  
 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
 5:4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.  
 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.  
 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.  
 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.  
 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.  
 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.  
 5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
 5:11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.  
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These are the teachings these Westboro folks are SUPPOSED to be following and emulating. Yet - I see NO demonstration of any KIND of mercy, peacemaking, or any other "Christian virtue" in their deeds. Their sole purpose appears to be to sow seeds of hatred and discontent. Not the acts that I have come to expect from "Christians". Arrogance, pride, anger, disrespect, and hatred are all I can see from them.

I wonder how many people they hope to win to their faith with their actions?

Now, as to the First Amendment, and its application in this case. Let me caveat everything I am about to say with this... I am an American and a Veteran. I am the son/nephew of veterans. I have children that are currently serving in the Armed Forces. So, now, I will exercise MY First Amendment Rights in stating MY opinion on this judgement.

The judgement handed down by the Supreme Court is based upon the "letter of the law" - but completely ignores the "spirit of the law". If these "judges" can look ANYONE in the eye and tell them, in complete honesty, that they believe our Founding Fathers would condone the behaviour of the folks from Westboro - then I will have to eat my hat. Because if they TRULY believe that - then I know that this country has TRULY lost its way. Or at least it's leadership has.

Do I have the right to voice my opinion and assemble to make my voice heard? Yes. Do the Westboro folks? According to the LETTER of the law - Yes.

But do EITHER of us have the right to do so in such a manner that infringes on the rights of others? NO.

With rights and privileges - come responsibilities. The responsibility to be RESPECTFUL of others is one of those.

They say "we were over 100 yards away" - yes, they were - in blatant visibility of the mourners who have just lost a beloved son/brother/nephew/grandson/friend. Inflicting their "rights" to assemble and their "rights" to defame and impugn the character of this fallen Marine and of the country he served - on the family of that young man.

To the folks from Westboro - I have this to say - and I know I am joined, whether vocally or in spirit, by the voices of other Veterans, families of veterans, friends of veterans, and others. Ours is a simple message to you.

I cannot call you Christians.

You are NOT representative of the people and spirit of our country.

You are a despicable few.

My anger says to retaliate - but my faith says I must love you. My anger says strike back - My faith says I must turn the other cheek.

Unlike you - who use ugly, hateful methods to get "your voice heard" - I will not show up at YOUR funerals and impugn your character and do everything in my power to destroy your dignity and add to your grief. This is NOT the way I was raised. This is NOT the way my faith teaches me to act.

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" are words you should read and heed - though you will not. You are like the willful spoiled child who, when they cannot garner attention from good deeds, will begin doing what bad things merely to gain the attention they feel they lack.

I do not hate you as people - I hate what you do and represent. I hate seeing the ugliness that every person is capable of brought into the public eye by an organization that purports itself to be of the Christian faith. I hate to see the suffering you cause to those who mourn - though you should be comforting them.

Perhaps, most of all, I hate thinking about the possibility that one of MY children may one day fall - putting forth the ultimate sacrifice - and that you will show up to exercise your "rights" at MY child's funeral. Because on that day - God forbid it occur - I am not sure that I will be strong enough to NOT exercise my SECOND Amendment rights. So, truly, I pray that day never comes. For all of our sakes.