

Clever Slogans Are Not Necessarily the Basis of Morality

By

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Slogans with flawed principles implemented hypocritically seem to permeate our culture. “Always err on the side of life”. This one is particularly disingenuous because it obfuscates a basic principle of morality and undermines the value of the human spirit.

The human being consists both of a physical body and a spirit which is consciousness, self awareness, thought, the ability to define right and wrong and, from a religious angle, the soul. For those who trust the bible, the significance of the difference between these elements was defined by Jesus “The Spirit gives life, the flesh (the body) counts for nothing” (Jn 6:63). The spirit is the essential part of life, survival of the body is insignificant in comparison.

Sure, life is important, but moral cultures and most religions err on the side of virtue. The concept of the greater good is essential. Liberty, freedom, duty, honor, country, truth, justice are engrained in the fabric of America. Society calls for the sacrifice of life in defense of its principles, Christianity honors martyrs who seek death rather than the betrayal of their belief, individuals and families sacrifice for each other, their country, their religion, and their values.

Slogans like “Always err on the side of life” are replacing the responsibility to think and understand moral alternatives with superficiality and self-righteousness. They are sufficiently clever and appealing (especially from a self centered angle as who doesn’t value their own life) but reducing moral decisions to catchphrases does not promote individual growth nor enhance society.

We are developing a culture of hypocrites. The slogan’s most prominent proponent was George Bush, who, as governor of Texas, never erred on the side of life when executing felons. I am not opposed to the death penalty when absolute certainty of threat and guilt exists, but when neither criteria are in place, execution isn’t erring on the side of life. A similar example exists with the killing of innocents as collateral damage while the absolute certainty does not exist of other alternative or the accomplishment of a greater good. And what about all of the slogan’s advocates who have rushed out to sign advanced directives to prevent the government and the medical establishment from “erring on the side of life” in favor of the well being and financial security of their family or simply to prevent prolonged suffering? A society who adopts a slogan as a cornerstone of its morality then plays fast and loose with its implementation is hypocritical not moral.

Many say that our culture is in decline because of attacks on Christianity (approximately 80% of America’s population). I believe religion, if sufficiently grounded, can survive a challenge especially with those odds, but I agree that we are in moral decline and place the blame on those among the Christian base who rely on slogans and superficiality rather than moral principles and hard work.