

Christians Do Not Have Rights

We hear a lot of talk—a lot of concern—about our rights. As Americans, we are thankful for the rights that have been spelled out for us in the Bill of Rights. At the same time, we are constantly looking over our shoulder because of a perceived threat that such-and-such group is taking away our rights.

- If you lean to the left, some right-wing lobby (or the government) is aggressively working to take away your right to choose ... or live where you want ... or ...
- If you lean to the right, some left-wing lobby (or the government) is working to take your right to own a gun ... or wave a flag ... or ...

I'll admit it. I like my rights. But I don't want to address our rights as American citizens. I want to address our rights as followers of Christ.

If you are a Christian, you have no rights.

No group took your rights away from you. You gave them away.

Jesus said, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Jesus told us to count the cost of following Him (Luke 14:25-34). When we come to Christ, we don't just come to Him as Savior; we come to Him as Lord. *Lord*. He calls the shots. He owns us. We are no longer our own, but we were bought by Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

We don't make ourselves doormats for anyone and everyone to walk on, but we are to be considerate of the preferences and desires for the sake of others.

"In humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others" (Phil 2:3-4).



Have you ever heard the name Eleanor of Aquitaine? She was the queen of France in the 12th century, and she is considered one of the most powerful women. Ever. Even



more than Oprah. When her husband, King Louis VII, returned from fighting the crusades, he walked into the castle clean shaven. My wife would've liked that (I look seriously pathetic with a beard), but not Eleanor. She thought her clean-shaven husband looked hideous, and she insisted he grow back his beard.

Being the sort of husband he was, Louis refused. Eleanor responded by divorcing him. Things were obviously not going well for the couple—but it only got worse when Eleanor turned around and married the king of England. The squabble in their now-defunct marriage led to a squabble between two countries that lasted almost 120 years—the Hundred Years' War. The pettiness over a beard led to political alliances that led to war, which led to the deaths of 3.5 million people.

If only Louis VII had set aside his preference—and set aside his Bic razor.

We can shake our self-righteous heads at the pettiness and unnecessary tragedy of this event, but we do the same thing in the church.

- We're scarred from the worship wars, fighting over our preferences for an organ or guitar.
- We're scarred from fighting over when to collect the offering or make the announcements.
- We scarred from fighting over sharing classrooms with other groups in the church.
- We're scarred from fighting over what color of toilet paper to put in the church restrooms. (I heard a pastor tell this story.)

To the outsider, these things appear petty, but we in the church have made them a big deal. A me-centered attitude leads to fighting and divisiveness—and that is not petty.

It's serious.

The greatest detriment to the church's witness in the world is how we treat each other. **So let me challenge you, follower of Christ, to do your part. Quit insisting on having things your way.** After all, you have no rights. You gave all your rights to Jesus, who calls us to follow Him in grace and love.