



WISCONSIN FAMILY COUNCIL
Marriage|Family|Life|Liberty

Church Connection March 2020

Strengthening, Preserving & Promoting Marriage, Family, Life & Religious Liberty

Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Matthew 22:17-21

Mark your calendar...

Join us for "2020 Vision: Contending for the Faith, Challenging the Culture"!

Thurs., Mar. 5,
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Appleton Machine Shed

Thurs., Mar. 12, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Sky Club Banquet Hall, Plover

Thurs., Mar. 26, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Golden Corral, Milwaukee

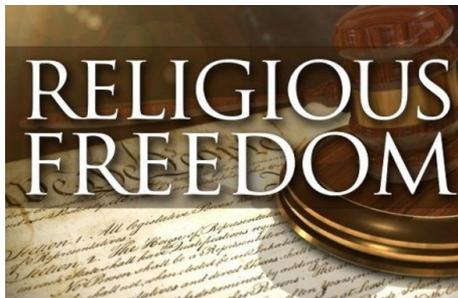
Register at wifamilycouncil.org/events or by calling us at 888-378-7395.

Religious Freedom: Worth Fighting For

Religious freedom. Two very simple words, easy to pronounce, but packed with meaning. These words represent an idea that was at the heart of the founding of our country. However, this idea is falling out of favor in our culture. That should concern us all.

We're not talking about freedom of worship. These days some elected authorities like to refer to "freedom of worship" when talking about the First Amendment to our US Constitution. Freedom of worship means that in places where worship would generally be considered typical or expected, people can express their beliefs and convictions without fear of government intrusion. That is decidedly not religious freedom as our Founders understood it, wrote about it and protected in the Constitution.

When the Constitution was written, the colonists had just a decade earlier fought a war for their independence, an independence that included being free from a state church.



In 1786, a year before the Constitution was written and signed, Thomas Jefferson drafted legislation that became known as the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. Jefferson considered this legislation one of the greatest achievements of his life. The proposal was adopted in the Virginia legislature on January 16, 1786, which is why Religious Freedom Day is recognized each year on January 16th.

Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom stopped the practice of taxing people to pay for the support of local clergy and protected the civil rights of people to express their religious beliefs without suffering discrimination. Jefferson's work became a model for those who drafted the First Amendment to the US Constitution.

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Plan Now to Vote!

Tuesday, April 7, Spring General Election, including State Supreme Court Justice

Jesus clearly stated that some things belong to Caesar and some things belong to God. Caesar may be owed our taxes; but God is owed our love, worship, service and obedience.

The principle of religious freedom is implicit in what Jesus explicitly proclaimed. Caesar (*i.e.*, the government) has no business interfering in what is owed to God. If governmental authorities seek to prevent obedience to God, the path is clear. We are to practice religious freedom and obey God.

This principle was practiced and stated by the apostles in Acts 5:29—Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The conscience may not be bound by unjust laws of man.

From God's perspective, religious freedom is a universal right, whether recognized by a government or not. We should be grateful for and defend religious liberty. We may not always have it. While we do, let's be good stewards of this amazing blessing!

The First Amendment says, in part, that: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

The first clause is often referred to as the "Establishment Clause." The wording is very clear. Congress is prohibited from establishing a national religion with a leader of both church and country, as in the Church of England. The clause does not say the church should not have any input into government or that the government can have absolutely nothing to do with a church or a religion. Sadly, courts over the years have taken great liberties in how they interpret this "Establishment Clause."

The second clause is known as the "Free Exercise Clause." Again the wording is crystal clear. Congress cannot make a law that prohibits the free exercise of a person's religion. Free exercise is about both public and private practice. It is about living out what we believe 24/7 in public places, in the halls of government and in the culture in general. Once again, activist courts over the years have done great violence to the clear and simple wording the Founders gave us in these opening clauses to the First Amendment. The Founders called religious freedom the "first freedom," not because it is the first part of the First Amendment, but because it is absolutely foundational to all of our other freedoms. Protecting and defending it is vitally important.

Periodically we need to remind ourselves that both the "Establishment Clause" and the "Free Exercise Clause" were aimed at restricting the government from interfering in the free exercise and public expressions of religion. We do well to oppose efforts to redefine freedom of religion to be worship contained within the walls of a building.

Religious freedom. Two powerful words expressing a powerful idea that we too often take for granted. Religious freedom is central to what made this country great and to what will keep it great. It is worth fighting for and defending today as much today as it was over 200 years ago. And just as importantly, let us recognize and exercise our religious freedom as the wonderful gift from God that it is.

About Wisconsin Family Council

Wisconsin Family Council is a 501 (c)(3) organization that has been advancing Judeo-Christian principles and values in Wisconsin since 1986. We have largely done this by informing Wisconsin citizens, policymakers and churches about the important legislative and cultural issues so that they can be involved in strengthening, preserving and promoting marriage, family, life and religious liberty in our state.

"Church Connection" is published monthly by WFC and is available to churches in Wisconsin.

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