

Shayla: Do these “assertive rights” conform to the mind of Christ?

Meforshim:

Allow me to reiterate the “rights” as you gave them to me.

Include these rights in your everyday thinking and gain self-respect, as well as respect from others.

I have the right to...

1. *Say “no”.*
2. *Be competent and proud of my accomplishments.*
3. *Feel and express anger.*
4. *Be treated as a capable human being.*
5. *Make mistakes and be responsible for them.*
6. *Change a situation.*
7. *Say “I don’t know, I don’t agree, and I don’t understand.”*
8. *Be treated with respect.*
9. *Express my needs, opinions, thoughts, ideas, and feelings.*
10. *Judge my own behavior and be responsible for it.*
11. *Take pride in my body and define attractiveness in my own terms.*
12. *Have a support system.*
13. *Be myself and have a separate identity.*
14. *Structure my own time priorities.*
15. *Request help and receive information from others.*
16. *Ask and not assume.*
17. *Have privacy.*
18. *Say “I’m not willing to accept that responsibility.”*
19. *Be imperfect.*
20. *Grow, learn, change and to value my age and experience.*
21. *Recognize MY needs as important.*

First, we must understand that not EVERYTHING on this list is wrong. There are some things here that hold some truth. And second, we must understand that the value of these statements depends very much on the definition of the terms and the degree of balance with which they are applied.

With those two caveats¹ I must say that as an elder and a believing counselor I have very serious reservations about this “bill of rights.” In my opinion it runs contrary to the basic tenets of orthodox Christianity and is the quintessential² example of secular humanism.

Let’s compare some of these points to biblical truth. As believers, it IS about the revealed Word of God isn’t it? My opinion and your opinion are equally worthless. What matters is what God has to say on the subject. Unless of course you don’t really believe in God in which case yours is no longer a Christian organization and a secular humanistic bill of rights makes perfect sense for you.

“I have the right to say no.” That depends. Who are you saying no to? You definitely have the right to say no to those who are telling you to not speak in the name of Jesus; to suppress the clarity of the gospel and to accept pluralism.³ To those people you definitely

¹ To qualify with a warning or clarification

² The most perfect embodiment of something

³ The belief that having numerous religious views is a desirable or socially beneficial condition.

should say no as the Apostles did⁴ and as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did.⁵ Paul certainly encouraged Titus to say no to those who promote false teaching in the guise of religious tolerance.⁶

You have every right to step into evil's face and push it back into the dark recesses of hell from which it came. Say no to the Hitlers of life. Say no to human trafficking. Say no to addiction.

However, you do NOT have the right to say no to Adonai Adonaim⁷. If you do, you do it to your own harm.⁸ Learn a lesson from our people's long history. Stubborn rebellion to God's will (which was Lucifer's first sin) is the same as witchcraft⁹ and will be disciplined by our Sovereign every time.

You do not have the right to say no to your moral and ethical responsibilities. Though we hold homosexual sin to be an abomination, it was not for the sin of homosexuality that God overthrew Sodom. They were destroyed because they failed to care for the poor. Their arrogance was their undoing.¹⁰

Many Germans failed to oppose the Nazis and stood by as the ash of the ovens settled on their roofs and shoulders. Prison guards, faced with the mass graves, shrugged their shoulders and defensively claimed they were only following orders. But we have a saying in Hebrew. "*Ain shaliach' le-dvar aveierah*" – literally "*there is no messenger in a case of sin.*" Normally a messenger is not responsible for the content of the message he delivers; responsibility is borne by the one who sent it. But if a messenger is sent to perform an evil act (a hired assassin, for example), he cannot defend himself with the claim that he was acting at someone else's command. The messenger bears responsibility for the evil he does.

If you say no to your responsibility to stand against oppressors you will answer to Yahweh Shaphat¹¹.

"I have the right to feel and express anger." This statement (like most of these) is only partially right. Emotions are morally neutral. They are designed to motivate our decision-making and behavior. Sexual attraction is healthy. Lust is unhealthy. Ambition is healthy. Greed and lust for power are not. You have the right to feel anger, but there are strict guidelines in how you may express it.

Anger against unrighteousness and injustice is healthy. Jesus certainly expressed his righteous indignation.¹² But Cain's reaction when his preferred mode of worship was rejected was wrong and ended up being his undoing.¹³

When God mercifully forgave the Ninevites when He saw their repentance Jonah was wrong to be angry that his prophecy was not fulfilled.¹⁴

The Prodigal's older brother was wrong to be angry and jealous of the attention his younger sibling was receiving.¹⁵

We need to be very cautious with anger. We are allowed to feel it (indeed we can't control what we feel in the first place) but we are not allowed to express it sinfully, thereby making us vulnerable to spiritual attack.¹⁶ We need to remember the Master's admonition.

⁴ Acts 5:28-29

⁵ Daniel 3:16-18

⁶ Titus 1:9-11

⁷ Lord of lords

⁸ Psalm 2:9-12

⁹ 1 Samuel 15:23

¹⁰ Ezekiel 16:49-50

¹¹ Proverbs 24:10-12; God our Judge

¹² Mark 3:5; John 2:14-17; 11:33, 37-38

¹³ Genesis 4:5-8

¹⁴ Jonah 4:1-4

¹⁵ Luke 15:25-28

- [Matthew 5:21-22 HCSB](#) "You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, **Do not murder**, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. (22) But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Fool!' will be subject to the Sanhedrin. But whoever says, 'You moron!' will be subject to hellfire.

“I have the right to be treated as a capable human being.” You actually need to BE a capable human being before you get to be treated as one. A sick person must be recognized as and treated as a sick person before they can hope to get better. If you have repeatedly shown yourself to be a fool, if you have failed to demonstrate that you have control over yourself and your addictions then you must be treated as a broken person. If you consistently fail to demonstrate good judgment, then you should not be considered leadership material. Respect is not a right. Respect must be earned.¹⁷

“I have the right to change a situation.” You may have the right to wish for a change in situation and even the right to ask for a change in situation but you do not necessarily have the right to have that situation changed. Jesus asked for the cup of suffering to pass from Him twice and was denied.¹⁸ Paul asked three times that his physical condition be improved and was also denied.¹⁹

Humanism tells you that all suffering is wrong and should be immediately corrected or escaped. Hashem²⁰ (who cares far more about your character than your comfort) dictates that suffering, judiciously administered by sovereign God and appropriately submitted to by saints, can be a tremendous learning tool.²¹ How very strange the Apostle’s statement must sound to the secular humanist’s ears!

- [2 Corinthians 12:10 HCSB](#) So because of Christ, I am pleased in weaknesses, in insults, in catastrophes, in persecutions, and in pressures. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

“I have the right to be treated with respect.” Again, without belaboring the point, respect must be EARNED. You do not have the right to act sinfully, behave atrociously, be irresponsible and lead many into sin and yet be treated with respect. Note the Spirit of Wisdom’s response to the recalcitrant:

- [Proverbs 1:24-32 HCSB](#) Since I called out and you refused, extended my hand and no one paid attention, (25) since you neglected all my counsel and did not accept my correction, (26) I, in turn, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when terror strikes you, (27) when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when trouble and stress overcome you. (28) Then they will call me, but I won't answer; they will search for me, but won't find me. (29) Because they hated knowledge, didn't choose to fear the LORD, (30) were not interested in my counsel, and rejected all my correction, (31) they will eat the fruit of their way and be glutted with their own schemes. (32) For the waywardness of the inexperienced will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them.

Obviously Adonaic Christianity²² strikes a substantially dissonant cord with “cultural Christianity”.

¹⁶ Ephesians 4:26-27

¹⁷ 1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:7-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3

¹⁸ Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:40-46; Mark 14:32-42; John 18:1b-2

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

²⁰ The Name (Leviticus 24:11 cp 3 John 1:7)

²¹ James 1:2-4

²² Christianity that claims Jesus not merely as Savior but as sovereign King and looks to the Scriptures for cultural cues.

“I have the right to express my needs, opinions, thoughts, ideas, and feelings.” Not if they’re sinful. Not if they harm others. Taking this statement to its logical conclusion, would mean that Christians like Dietrich Bonhoeffer should not have opposed Hitler’s opinions of the Jews. Racial bigotry was Hitler’s opinion and he had a right to it. The Klu Klux Klan should be allowed to express their opinions. Child pornographers should have their rights to free speech protected. Ridiculous.

This is the level of foolishness that moral relativism will lead one to. This clearly stems from Lowlander²³ philosophy that states there is no such thing as absolute right and wrong. It is not even remotely Christian and is in fact antithetical²⁴ to Christian thought and behavior.

“I have the right to take pride in my body and define attractiveness in my own terms.” No you do not. Do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, (20) for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body. Your beauty should not consist of outward things *like* elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold ornaments or fine clothes; (4) instead, *it should consist of* the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very valuable in God’s eyes.²⁵

“I have the right to structure my own time priorities; to have privacy.” Controlling one’s own time and the enjoyment of privacy is a luxury – not a right – for those who truly grasp their role as servants and ministers of God. Our Master wanted a time away to rest and recuperate but when he saw the crowds that came to hear Him and be healed by Him, He took pity upon them, set aside his “right to privacy” and served them.²⁶

“I have the right to say ‘I’m not willing to accept that responsibility.’” Again, not if you are being asked to step up for righteousness or justice. Thank God Jesus didn’t take this attitude in regards to our salvation. Thank God Paul didn’t take this attitude when God said “I will certainly show him how much he must suffer for My name!”²⁷

“I have the right to be imperfect.” No you do not. None of us will ever be sinless.²⁸ But Hashem has commanded us to try.²⁹ Though the Scriptures understand that practical holiness is a process,³⁰ it commands that every effort must be made to achieve it.

- **Philippians 3:13-15a HCSB** Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, (14) I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus. (15) Therefore, all who are mature should think this way.

Embracing one’s sinfulness and imperfections as a “right”; excusing or dismissing our trespasses as mere peccadilloes³¹, slight deficiencies or mere venial sins is the height of stupidity. Between admitting our sinfulness with a contrite heart and arrogantly declaring our right to imperfection is a vast philosophical and spiritual gulf.

²³ “Lowlander”: one whose primary concern is this earth and who takes his philosophical and cultural cues from the worldly system. “Highlander”: one whose primary concern is the advancement of the kingdom of God and who views his citizenship as residing in heaven.

²⁴ Directly opposes or contrasted; opposite

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 3:3-4

²⁶ Mark 6:32-34

²⁷ Acts 9:16

²⁸ Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8, 10

²⁹ Leviticus 11:45; 20:7, 26; 1 Peter 1:14-16

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12-13

³¹ A very minor or slight sin or offense; a trifling fault

Conclusion

Self-Advancement vs. Self-Abasement. Lowlander philosophy follows the Devil in that old lie “you shall be as gods”.³² Lowlanders believe that in promoting one’s own rights, self-love will blossom, creating a more perfect person. But Adonaic Christianity follows Mashiach’s³³ example and believe that if the only truly perfect Person felt it necessary to set aside his rights then we too should follow this path to personal perfection.

- **Philippians 2:3-8 HCSB** Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. (4) Everyone should look out not *only* for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (5) Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, (6) who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage. (7) Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And when He had come as a man in His external form, (8) He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death--even to death on a cross.

This is not something that was only required of the Messiah for we are categorically told to imitate his mindset.

- **Matthew 20:25-28 HCSB** But Jesus called them over and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and the men of high position exercise power over them. (26) It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, (27) and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; (28) just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life--a ransom for many."

Obsequiousness³⁴ vs. Spiritual Boldness. Lowlanders consistently urge believers to be passive; to relegate ourselves to being a spiritual panacea³⁵ that can be offered in times of stress and discomfort; a moral analgesic to remove the pain of the consequences of our sin. We are barely allowed to lean quietly in and offer a spiritual³⁶ “bon mot” in an obsequious manner; at all times refraining from saying anything too radical, too uncomfortable because after all, it IS just an opinion.

However, the Apostle Paul’s call to disciples everywhere is to wage war – not in a fleshly manner, since our weapons are not mere weak, fleshy things but spiritually powerful. We demolish demonic strongholds. We demolish arguments and every high-minded thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.³⁷

This “bill of rights” is a prime example of humanistic high-mindedness. I urge you: be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition; based on the elemental forces of the world and not based on Christ.³⁸ Hold fast to the faithful message as taught, so that you will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and refute those who contradict it.³⁹

³² Genesis 3:5

³³ The Hebrew word for “Messiah”)

³⁴ Characterized by or showing servile complaisance or deference; fawning; servilely compliant or deferential.

³⁵ A remedy for all disease or ills; cure-all; an answer or solution for all problems or difficulties

³⁶ A witty remark or comment; clever saying or witticism

³⁷ 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

³⁸ Colossians 2:8

³⁹ Titus 1:9