

Afraid to Talk Religion?

*Calumet Toastmasters, Club# 3313, District# 11
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BEGINNING

Should we or should we not talk about our religion in groups like Toastmasters? Today's my talk is inspired from an article that appeared in Toastmasters monthly magazine of January 1998. I am going to share the author's views on this topic and also add my own comments as and when I feel appropriate.

The author starts with a simple statement -
"To better understand one another, we need to share what is important to us"

BODY

It was his experience that some Toastmaster clubs do not encourage religious speeches for few reasons.

1. Fear of being proselytized

This may be the strongest reason why Toastmasters avoid discussing spiritual issues. They may fear that someone may use the club as a forum to convert or solicit members to a particular religion or doctrine.

But as long as I as a speaker say at the outset of my speech that I am not out to promote my religion and follow it through by talking specifically about what I liked about my faith & if I do not mention why others should join it, I think it is still fair to talk about my religion in my Toastmasters club.

For ex. An active member of Big Brothers/Big Sisters can definitely talk about how his experience as a volunteer enriches his life without asking everyone to become a Big Brother/Big Sister.

So, Toastmasters should be able to talk about important aspects of their lives without turning the speech into a sales pitch.

2. Religion is an inappropriate speech topic since discussion of it can turn heated

Some people fear that a religious talk will stir up an argument. Well, Toastmaster clubs are like extended families. Club members don't usually challenge a speaker. If for some reason an anger is expressed, that is all the more reason to talk about an issue. Anger usually stems from a misunderstanding and can best be resolved by straight communication. And Toastmaster are, or are striving to be, experts at communicating. The way a Toastmaster becomes an expert and remains one is by continually exercising his/her communication skills.

3 Religion is too hard to talk about

NO, it's not. If I can not talk few minutes about my own faith in my religion, how good my worship is towards my religion? I shouldn't hesitate to talk about my experiences in life when I resort to God for some help. For ex. When some crisis happens at home or work, I put my best effort to resolve it and when it comes to a stage where things are totally out of my control and I do not see any light in my path, I do pray God and seek his help. At that moment, some miracle happens to me, and trust me I am not Surya. Somehow things work out fine and I will have the situation under control.

So, it is definitely not too hard to talk about my religion and my faith in it.

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CONCLUSION

The bottom line is, talking about religion is absolutely okay in groups like Toastmasters. To better understand one another, we need to share what is important to us and Religion is definitely important to us since we believe in it. However, the speaker has a very important responsibility: to balance sharing of personal opinions and experiences with generous respect for differing opinions & respect for other religions.

I would like to conclude my talk with a note here. No matter what religion you worship, if you are not concerned about your fellow human being, God himself is not concerned about you because, whether you are a Hindu or a Christian or a Muslim, every religion says one thing in common & unfortunately this is what we all have hard time in understanding it - **Humanity is the highest form of worship.**

Let me share with you a small story to elaborate this message. Two brothers Rick and John were in a rush to reach a church; they had only 5 mins before the church closes for the day. So, John was driving fast. On their way, they suddenly saw a small boy who fell off from his bicycle on his way to school. He hurt his ankle so badly that he was literally crying. Rick asked his brother to stop the car so that they can go and check the boy to make sure he is okay. But John says "Are you crazy, we have 4 mins left before the church doors are closed and if we miss today, remember we will not be able to make it until next month because we are going on a tour. So, let's forget the boy and proceed to the church, he will be okay". But Rick could not buy his brother's words. He said "Brother, I am sorry my heart says I should get down here. You please proceed to the church and may be I will make it next month." So, Rick got off the car, let his brother go. He went to the little boy who was still crying, told him that everything will be alright, did some first aid treatment to the ankle and asked him to stretch the leg. After few minutes, the little boy felt much better and he could ride the bicycle all the way to school.

In the evening, both brothers met each other at home and John started scolding Rick and said he pities his brother for missing the church for the little boy which he thought was a silly reason. Rick smiled at him and said nothing. Looking at all this, God said to himself: "Mr. John, forget about you pitying your brother but I pity you, because when you rushed to the church, I was not really in the church that time, I was sitting right next the little boy who hurt his ankle and crying. So, it was your brother who was closer to me and not you. So, I pity you".

So, the message here is to realize that God always stays with people who are suffering and the best & easiest way to be with God is to be with the people who are in need and share whatever we can, because again - **"Humanity is the highest form of worship"**.

THANK YOU
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