

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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March 31, 2020

SENT VIA U.S. MAIL AND EMAIL
mike.lindell@mypillow.com

Mike Lindell
CEO
MyPillow
343 E 82nd St #100
Chaska, MN 55318

Re: Objection to preaching during a Coronavirus Task Force briefing

Dear Mr. Lindell:

We are writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to object to your preaching at the White House Coronavirus Task Force briefing on March 30. We were contacted by concerned American citizens who saw and objected to your remarks, including many of our 31,000 members across the country. FFRF works to protect the constitutional separation between state and church and educates about nontheism.

At that briefing, you read from prepared notes. You then asked President Trump's permission to read something else you had written and said:

God gave us grace on November 8th, 2016, to change the course we were on. God had been taken out of our schools and lives. A nation had turned its back on God. And I encourage you: Use this time at home to get - home to get back in the Word, read our Bibles, and spend time with our families. . . . With our great President, Vice President, and this administration and all the great people in this country praying daily, we will get through this and get back to a place that's stronger and safer than ever.

What you did was wrong, and you knew it. You asked permission to read something you “wrote off the cuff.”¹ This betrays that you knew better. It wasn’t off the cuff. It was off script and inappropriate.

You were at a presidential task force briefing, standing in front of the White House behind a presidential seal. With the full power, prestige, and imprimatur of the federal government — of We the People — you exploited the invitation to promote your personal religion as if you were doing an infomercial for your pillow.

Americans tuned in to this briefing to receive critical information about the survival of our society and species. You used it as a self-conscious opportunity to hawk your personal holy book and betray America’s founding values.

What you said was wrong. Like many evangelical Christians, you seem to be laboring under a persecution complex when you argue that: “God had been taken out of our schools and lives. A nation had turned its back on God.” This sloppy attack on our secular government misses several important points.

First, your god was never taken out of our schools or lives. Citizens are free to worship (or not) as we please. America was not founded on God; it was founded as a secular nation under a godless constitution that draws its power from the people. Preserving a neutral government is not “taking God out.” Our founders could have done what other nations had done and set up a government based on a god or a creed. Instead, they chose to keep religion and government separate. The “wall of separation” between state and church is a great American original. We invented it. We should be *proud* of that fact, not belittle it in the White House.

Second, Benjamin Franklin observed that if you need the power of the government to promote your religion, then your religion is bad: “When a Religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support, so that its Professors are oblig’d to call for the help of the Civil Power, ’tis a Sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.”²

¹ The transcript reads:

Lindell: “Now, I wrote something off the cuff. If I can read this?”

Trump: “Okay.”

Lindell: “[Laughs.] God gave us...”

² Benjamin Franklin, *Letter from Benjamin Franklin to Richard Price, 9 October 1780, in The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 389–399 (Barbara B. Oberg, ed., 1997).

Finally, you called on Americans to “read our bibles,” as if all Americans respect the bible or consider it to be a reliable source of truth. You may not know this, but many of us who do not embrace the bible actually score better than Christians on tests of religious knowledge.³ That is *why* many of us are nonreligious. We would like to encourage *you* to read the bible. Not just a few popular verses, but all of it. From the “begats,” through the genocides, rapes, pestilences, murders, and worse that were commanded, condoned or committed by the bloodthirsty god you pretend to worship. Check out Matthew 6:5–6, where Jesus condemns public prayer and piety as hypocrisy. Your company might pay special attention to Ezekiel 13:20 (KJV):

“Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against your pillows.”

That verse is directed against false prophets, but from our point of view, *you* are the false prophet. You are falsely mixing government with your religion. You are falsely maligning our great secular nation. You are free to disagree with us, but you are not free to enlist the power of government to settle the argument.

You encouraged Americans to spend this time sheltering at home by reading an ancient immoral patriarchal text. We would encourage you, instead, to read a book written by one of our brave and patriotic founding fathers, Thomas Paine. In *The Age of Reason*, Paine wrote: “It is from the Bible that man has learned cruelty, rapine, and murder; for the belief of a cruel God makes a cruel man.” He also wrote: “My own mind is my own church.”

None of us can be free if the government dictates a preferred religion. Please stop violating the spirit of the First Amendment and help us protect true religious liberty by keeping government and religion separate.

Very truly,



Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker
Co-presidents
ALG/DB:als

³ See, e.g., Pew Research Center, “What Americans Know About Religion,” July 23, 2019, at <https://pewrsr.ch/345BeVR>.