

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

THREE MYTHS & THREE FACTS



Recent polling suggests that Americans value [religious freedom](#). But many don't understand it.

As a result, the marketplace of ideas is littered with mischaracterizations and myths about religious freedom and its role in American society.

Sometimes, those myths can help lead to people being targeted or punished for simply living out their faith.

ADF clients know that all too well. Day in and day out our attorneys are in court defending religious freedom, and the requests for legal help keep pouring in. That defense is made possible by the [generous support of people like you](#).

We wanted to give back to you. That's why we've created this short, accessible guide to some of the common myths about religious freedom.

So, use this guide to be ready to answer some common religious freedom myths.

ONE

MYTH

The “separation of church and state” means that the government should treat religious groups worse than non-religious groups.

FACT

People of faith shouldn't be treated like second-class citizens. The government is required to treat religious organizations equally.

THE DETAILS:

You likely have heard Thomas Jefferson's infamous line touting a “wall of separation” between church and state. People often use that line to justify discrimination against religious groups and individuals. But that line and logic is found nowhere in the Constitution. It's true. Instead, the First Amendment's Establishment Clause protects the church from government control. It does not wall off the public from religious speech. Yet, even today, this “wall of separation” myth continues to inspire discrimination against religious groups. That must stop.

LEARN MORE:

[Check out this video](#) about one of ADF's U.S. Supreme Court wins (*Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Comer*) on this very issue.

#TWO

MYTH

Religious freedom only benefits Christians.

FACT

Religious freedom benefits everyone.

THE DETAILS:

Religious freedom is a God-given right. It is grounded in the fact that human beings are made in God's image, endowed with reason, free will, and an eternal soul. America's Founders knew that government has a duty to preserve that freedom for each person to follow his or her own conscience. In other words, religious freedom is for the atheist, the Buddhist, the Muslim, the Jew, and the Christian alike. And studies have shown that countries with high degrees of religious freedom are more stable and possess a greater level of flourishing.

LEARN MORE:

[Read this story](#) highlighting how religious freedom benefits society.

#THREE

MYTH

Religious freedom is just an excuse for discrimination.

FACT

Religious freedom fosters true tolerance.

THE DETAILS:

This may be the most common—and destructive—myth about religious freedom. You've likely heard activists use it to describe the cases of people like Jack Phillips. They often deploy this myth as a weapon to shame and marginalize Americans who simply want to peaceably live and work according to their faith without fear of government punishment—for example, creative professionals who want to express messages that line up with their deepest convictions. Yet this freedom protects all Americans. With true religious freedom, we tolerate a diversity of opinions and don't use the government to punish those who hold to a different view. There should be—there must be—room in the public square for people of good will on both sides of culture's biggest issues like marriage, abortion, gender identity, and more.

LEARN MORE:

[Watch this video](#) about former ADF client Kelvin Cochran, who was fired for his faith.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW



PRAY

Please ask God to transform the hearts and minds of people across this nation to protect religious freedom for all.



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GIVE

Your donations help make all of this possible. Give today to defend religious freedom!

Thank you!

To learn more about Alliance Defending Freedom, visit [ADFLegal.org](https://www.adflegal.org) or call 800-835-5233.