

# Jesus, disqualified

by [Martin E. Marty](#) in the [March 7, 2001](#) issue

"There's a long line of people who on the basis of their position on life couldn't be attorney general. We could start with Jesus Christ himself." So said Senator Robert C. Smith (R., N.H.), as quoted in the *New York Times* February 1.

Though "What would Jesus do?" has become a tired slogan, it's an appropriate response to Senator Smith's statement. We have no idea what Jesus would actually say if he were to confront Smith. But those who rely on the Gospels to find out what Jesus said and did have clues about whether he held "positions on life" that could disqualify him from being attorney general of the U.S. Here is how he might respond to the kinds of questions that come up at confirmation hearings.

*Q. Jesus, what is your opinion of your ruler?*

A. Herod? Look at Luke 13:32, where I call him a fox. Foxes are cunning, small.

*Q. What about the separation of church and state?*

A. I told you in Mark 12:17, "Give to God the things that are God's." As for Caesar? My fellow Jews were carrying around a coin with his image on it. The emperor was a god, his image an idol. I told them to get rid of it. I don't think much of the "state."

*Q. But some of us speak of you as king and say we have no king but Jesus. Doesn't that have a bearing on the concept of the "state"?*

A. As you read in John 18:36, I told Pilate that "my kingdom is not from this world." Can't you Americans ever learn that?

*Q. But we do need and have rulers, a state and a world, and we wonder what kind of a law-enforcer you would be. Many laws support "family values." How are you on family values?*

A. Which one of the dozens of comments I made on this do you want? Typical is Luke 12:53, where I say that I have brought division, "father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law

against . . .”

*Q. Stop! There are better ways to get at this subject. Where do you stand on divorce ?*

A. Read Matthew 5:31: “But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the grounds of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” How well have you done with this “family value” in your own lives, senators?

*Q. I'll try again. On the basis of your position on life, what have you said on abortion?*

A. I don't think you'll find anything in the record. Reread the Gospels.

*Q. What about homosexual acts?*

A. Ditto.

*Q. Pornography? Adultery? Lust? Obscenity?*

A. It's all there in Matthew 5. If you would want me, as attorney general, to enforce everything in the Sermon on the Mount literally, we'd have plenty of amputees in our population. Remember verses 28 to 30: “Everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. . . . And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.”

*Q. Affirmative action?*

My father and I have worked that out in what you call the Beatitudes. We turn things topsy-turvy and don't base things on merit. “The meek shall inherit the earth.”

*Q. Have you anything else to say about your position on life that would help us decide how to vote?*

A. “God so loved the world . . .” And I'm too busy saving it to take time to present my credentials in order to be approved by its committees.