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If someone says "Go with God" when you leave, you may find that a response of "Take care of yourself" makes your point while still appearing polite.

But being polite and considerate of others doesn't mean that you should let yourself be pressured into religious demonstrations that you disagree with. It is polite to cover your head when visiting a Jewish temple (just as you would dress appropriately for any occasion), but you should not feel pressured to cross yourself with holy water when entering a Catholic church (since this is a demonstration of religious devotion).

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but do not participate in them. Sit in polite silence while others bow their heads. Politely decline to give the blessing if asked.

If you are entertaining guests who normally pray before eating, you don't need to offer them time to pray any more than they would offer to let you eat before prayer at their home. But if they ask for a moment for their private devotion, it doesn't hurt you to let them have it. If someone who knows your beliefs asks you to pray with them, consider how you will respond. You'll likely want to decline with a polite "no, thank you." But there might be rare occasions — such as when the request comes from an ill grandparent who would gain more in comfort than you would lose in philosophical points — when you make an exception.

As an atheist, how should you respond to more casual religious wishes? Is there any need to be offended by "Merry Christmas" or "Happy holidays" if you do not celebrate the occasion and the well-wisher was sincerely given? Should you object to "God bless you" after you put a dollar in a street performer's hat or "bless you"



WHAT DO I DO WHEN PEOPLE PRAY?

A Question of Moral Atheism

from blog.iamanatheist.com



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IMAGINE YOU HAVE been invited to attend a wedding in a church or you are attending a large family dinner and the host announces that she is going to say grace. As an atheist, what do you do when people around you are praying?

Some atheists are tempted to show their disrespect for such "silly" or "absurd" practices. They make faces, they look around impatiently, they roll their eyes when the subject is even brought up. But what does this kind of behavior do? It shows the atheist to be disrespectful of the beliefs, feelings, and traditions of others. It also invites payback in the form of catty remarks about atheism later in the day.

Some atheists join in. Prayer doesn't mean anything to them, so what do they care if they pretend they are doing it? But these atheists may be misrepresenting their beliefs, reinforcing other peoples' impression that atheism is not a deeply held philosophy or sewing doubt about whether the person really is an atheist.

As a moral atheist, you might want to consider the middle ground. Do not disrupt the prayers of others,

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QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM: INSTRUCTIONS

We appreciate your interest in helping us spread information about moral atheism! To make copies of this pamphlet for your own use or to share with friends, follow these simple steps:

1. Print pages one and two of this document, one on each side of the same piece of paper (if you don't have access to a duplex printer, print page one, put the page back in the paper tray upside down, and print page two — depending on the type of printer, you may have to experiment a bit).
2. Cut the printout in two, using the thin rules across the middle of the page as a guide.
3. Fold the two pieces of paper in half, making a pair of small pamphlets.
4. Keep one of the pamphlets to read, and give the other away to an interested friend or stranger.

That's it! If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, we invite you to share them by leaving a comment on blog.iamanatheist.org. Thanks!
