

The Freedom to Say “Jesus”

November 12, 2021

Some people have it tough to begin with. Then others make their lives even tougher for no good reason.

Fifth-grader Brian Hickman has cerebral palsy. Inspired by his mother, Adriana, he doesn't let it keep him down.

His resilience has recently been tested. One of the things Brian loves to do is dance, and he spent weeks preparing for a talent show at his elementary school.

Then the school said *no*.

His mother knew what to do: enlist the help of Alliance Defending Freedom, which promptly filed a lawsuit against the Los Angeles Unified School District.

He wanted to dance to “We Shine,” a contemporary Christian song that mentions Jesus. In accordance with the school district, administrators told him he couldn't use it.

Too offensive.

The principal opined that permitting the song would violate “separation of church and state.”



Well, “separation of church and state” is a term of art for what is in the Constitution: the right to free exercise of religion, and a prohibition on establishing a state church.

Letting Brian dance to his preferred music could not have resulted in the imposition of a prayer schedule on the citizenry, in forcing Episcopalians to become Lutherans or vice versa, or in otherwise coercively establishing religion.

No, officials were merely consulting their own sensibilities and deciding that they or the students could not abide exposure to Christian sentiments. Since Brian likes only Christian songs, any alternate he might have come up with would probably also have been refused.

But why make him start from scratch anyway?

His mother knew what to do: enlist the help of Alliance Defending Freedom, which promptly filed a lawsuit against the Los Angeles Unified School District. Which promptly reversed course and let Brian dance to the music he wanted.

Case closed.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.