

CNN's Panel Gangs Up on Pastor Joel Osteen Over Gay Marriage

By [Ryan Robertson](#) | September 20, 2012 | 18:32

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While CNN's ratings continue to slump, [reaching record lows](#), its hosts and anchors seem intent on alienating what few socially-conservative viewers they may have left. Morning talk shows like Starting Point with Soledad O'Brien generally prefer to have roundtable discussions with maybe one token conservative panelist while the rest of the gang predictably parrots liberal talking points and espouses left-of-center convictions on policy issues.

Take for example how televangelist and author Joel Osteen was treated during his Thursday morning appearance to promote his new book. Guru Deepak Chopra joined in on a conversation about the health and wellness of our mind, body, and soul. Chopra was completely ignored as soon as the topic transitioned to the matter of gay marriage. All attention was given to the pastor, who had the temerity to, as Christian pastors tend to do, stick to Biblical teachings on the matter. (audio [available here](#); video below)

Yet this did not sit well with panel participant Richard Socarides -- [a gay rights activist](#) and Soledad O'Brien -- who hosted the 2010 special "[Gary and Tony Have a Baby](#)" and has been quite rude to pro-traditional marriage advocates like [FRC President Tony Perkins](#) before.

As soon as they fulfilled their obligation to talk about the book, it became abundantly clear why "one of the most recognizable faces of Christianity in America today" was invited on the show for an interview. Knowing full well that Osteen would have to be diplomatic with his responses, Socarides and O'Brien were ready to pounce. Half-way through the interview, O'Brien quickly segued to the unrelated subject.

Let me ask you a question, because when you came on Piers Morgan's show a while ago, he asked you about homosexuality, and almost every time we have a pastor on, it's a conversation we have. And you're known for these uplifting services and talk to a lot, it's like 45,000 people who attend. And I always wonder when you say homosexuality is a sin and there's a bunch of people who clearly are gay who are in your church. You're calling them sinners. I mean, that is the opposite of uplifting, I would think.

Socarides, who hadn't spoken up until this conversation started, was visibly upset at one point. The notion that his sexual behavior is a sinful choice was infuriating to him. "Do you think you

choose to be gay or not gay?" he asked. Followed by "Do you think you choose to be straight? So how could I choose to be gay?" Realizing that he had just lost his cool, he apologized, "I'm sorry. I'm trying to be respectful. I'm a big admirer of your work."

It was clear that he was uncomfortable, but Osteen retained his friendly southern preacher persona and stood by his firm belief in Scripture. While he was almost pleading with them to move along, his interrogators seemingly could not be satisfied until they got him to say something he would regret.

Relevant Transcript Below (Emphasis Mine)

CNN

Starting Point with Soledad O'Brien

September 20, 2012

7:45 AM EDT

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN: Joel Osteen is one of the most recognizable faces of Christianity in America today, from his television sermons, which reach millions across the country, to his podcasts, to his best-selling books. He's trying to bring his ministry to homes around the world. He's got a new book out. It's called "I Declare: 31 Promises To Speak Over Your Life." And Joel Osteen joins me this morning. It's nice to have you with us. So we were just debating whether speaking affirmations out loud really makes a difference. This book is 31 affirmations because it's sort to match every day for the month, right?

JOEL OSTEEEN: That's right. You know, Soledad, I believe it does, of course. I think how you start the day many times determines what kind of day you're going to have. A lot of people get out of bed and they think, I don't want to go to work, I don't feel good --

O'BRIEN: Who told you we were thinking --

OSTEEEN: It just draws in the negativity. But if you can get up and speak something positive over life, Lord, you know, God, thank you for your favor today. I declare your blessings. I declare your faith. I declare wisdom. It's just getting your mind going in the right direction. I don't think there's anything magic about, but those words go out and comes right back in and affects your own self-image.

O'BRIEN: Do you agree with that? You think affirmations can actually make an actual change in your life?

CHOPRA: I start my day, by the way, by asking myself three questions? Who am I? What do I want and what's my purpose? And then I do some of the things you do. Because I've believed forever that there's no mental event that doesn't have a brain representation, that every thought actually generates molecules. And we know that. And these are molecules you've heard about,

endorphins, opiates, oxytocin, dopamines, serotonin, they're antidepressant molecules, but they're also immunomodulators. It modulates the activity of your immune system.

O'BRIEN: Which I totally follow you on that. I'm going to read affirmation for day 10, "I declare that God will accelerate his plan for my life as I put my trust in him. I accomplish my dreams faster than I thought possible.

It will not take years to overcome an obstacle, to get out of debt, to meet the right person. God is doing things faster than before. He will give me victory sooner than I think. He has blessings that will thrust me years ahead, this is my declaration."

When I get to the debt part, I'm like, really? You get up and do your affirmations and that's going to lead -- you're going to get out of debt faster?

OSTEEN: That's just the opposite of getting up and saying, nothing good ever happens to me. I'm single. I've been single for 20 years, Joel, I'm never going to get married now. You've got to change your thinking.

When you start the day off like this, it's activating -- it's activating faith, it activates God's power in your life. The way I believe is that faith is what causes God to work. So when you're simply believing that, God, I believe you got the right person out there for me. I believe that I will get the right breaks. That I won't be in debt all my life, it's a frame of mind.

DEEPAK CHOPRA: And on a very simple level, it changes your perception. You start looking for opportunities. It changes your behavior, your speech, and your social intersections. Your personal relationships are all dependent on what you're saying to yourself. That internal dialogue influences everything that happens outside.

OSTEEN: It's the power of positive thinking.

CHOPRA: Even more.

MARGARET HOOVER: How do you -- what makes for an exceptional sermon. Your delivery is what makes people watch you. How do you deliver an exceptional sermon?

OSTEEN: Well, for me, it's something I'm going to say that's going to empower people. I try to talk to people like I would want them to talk to me. I also think about how -- you know, I talk to a lot of people during the week and they're going through struggles and things like that. What can I do to lift their spirits? I believe there are enough pushing people down already. So when people leave one of our services or read one of my books, I want them to leave saying, I can be better and rise higher. It's trying to speak to people one on one. Not speaking down to them. I mean, I was raised and my father was a great minister, he didn't speak down people, but in the old days, church, you know, you went to church to know what you were doing wrong. You left there thinking, I'm so guilty, I can't do right, but it's just the opposite. I want people to leave thinking, I can be a better father, I can be a better employer. I can accomplish my dreams. It's speaking to the seeds of greatness that God's placed in all of us.

O'BRIEN: Let me ask you a question, because when you came on Piers Morgan's show a while ago, **he asked you about homosexuality, and almost every time we have a pastor on, it's a conversation we have. And you're known for these uplifting services and talk to a lot, it's like 45,000 people who attend. And I always wonder when you say homosexuality is a sin and there's a bunch of people who clearly are gay who are in your church. You're calling them sinners. I mean, that is the opposite of uplifting, I would think.**

OSTEEN: Well, Soledad, I don't necessarily focus on that. I only talk about that in the interviews. The other thing, Christianity, we categorize sin. I mean, pride is a sin. Being critical is a sin. Being negative is a sin.

RICHARD SOCARIDES: You say we're all sinners?

OSTEEN: We are all sinners.

SOCARIDES: So sexuality is not so bad, right?

OSTEEN: It's not --

SOCARIDES: Nobody is God's best, right?

OSTEEN: We're all growing.

SOCARIDES: Don't you think, though, with the country struggling with increasing acceptance of all its citizens and you're for basic fairness for everybody that in situations where we're trying to pass these marriage equality bills in certain states now. That is, you have an important voice to lend to that, especially to kids who are maybe worried about who they are and where they fit in the community?

OSTEEN: Well, you know, I think I have an important voice but I think I've been good -- I think part of my, if you want to call it success, I've stayed in my lane and my lane is lifting people's spirits and there are issues that good, bible-believing people see on both sides of the fence.

SOCARIDES: **You would say to gay young people that, you know, do what you feel is comfortable, yes?**

OSTEEN: You know, I would say do what I feel like the scripture says. I don't think being --

SOCARIDES: **Well, there's a big debate about what scripture says, right?**

OSTEEN: It is, it is.

SOCARIDES: That's good.

O'BRIEN: But when you say -- **you would say the scripture says homosexuality is a sin?**

OSTEEN: Exactly.

O'BRIEN: I go to church regularly, but I'm not so strong on the Bible. You have to walk me through this. And there are some pastors who disagree. They say the scriptures don't defend that and Jesus didn't weigh in on homosexuality. So my question is, when you're talking to your 45,000 people in your service and some of them are gay, you're saying to them you're a sinner.

OSTEEN: Well, Soledad, first of all, in my services I don't cover all these issues that we talk about here.

O'BRIEN: But you make it clear that you think that homosexuality is a sin.

OSTEEN: When I read the scripture, that's what I believe, that the scripture condemns it or says it's a sin. It also says, you know, lying it and being prideful is.

O'BRIEN: So you shouldn't lie. But for people who are gay, you're saying so you shouldn't be gay? That's what --

OSTEEN: They can't choose not to be gay. You have to work out your own salvation.

SOCARIDES: Do you think you choose to be gay or not gay? Do you think you choose to be straight?

OSTEEN: I know I have not chosen to be straight. That's who I am.

SOCARIDES: So how could I choose to be gay?

O'BRIEN: One question at a time.

SOCARIDES: I'm sorry. I'm trying to be respectful. I'm a big admirer of your work. I think you're trying to lift people up.

OSTEEN: I am. And I don't understand all those issues and so, you know, I try to stick on the issues that I do understand. I know this. I'm for everybody. I'm not for pushing people down. Obviously I watched the story on bullying and things like that, that come from it. I don't know where the fine line is. I do try to stay in my lane and lift people's spirits.

O'BRIEN: I'm going to try some of these affirmations. I don't believe it. I don't believe it works. I really don't.

SOCARIDES: I do affirmation.

O'BRIEN: We have to take a break.

HOOVER: You have spiritual evidence here and spiritual evidence here.

O'BRIEN: I won't give it 31 days, but I'll do seven and we'll see how it goes. Thank you for joining us.

HOOVER: It will change your life.

O'BRIEN: The book is called "I Declare: 31 Promises To Speak Over Your Life." We're back in just a moment. Stay with us.

7:53 AM EDT (8 min 5 secs)

Read more: <http://newsbusters.org/blogs/ryan-robertson/2012/09/20/cnns-panel-gangs-pastor-joel-osteen-over-gay-marriage#ixzz2Put22VWd>