

2 Timothy 2:23-26 ²³ But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. ²⁴ And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, ²⁵ In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; ²⁶ And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

AMPLIFIED ²³ But refuse (shut your mind against, have nothing to do with) trifling (ill-informed, unedifying, stupid) controversies over ignorant questionings, for you know that they foster strife and breed quarrels. ²⁴ And the servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome (fighting and contending). Instead, he must be kindly to everyone and mild-tempered [preserving the bond of peace]; he must be a skilled and suitable teacher, patient and forbearing and willing to suffer wrong. ²⁵ He must correct his opponents with courtesy and gentleness, in the hope that God may grant that they will repent and come to know the Truth [that they will perceive and recognize and become accurately acquainted with and acknowledge it], ²⁶ And that they may come to their senses [and] escape out of the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him, [henceforth] to do His [God's] will.

TRADITIONAL TOLERANCE

- Webster's Dictionary defines "tolerate" as "to recognize and respect others' beliefs, practices, etc. without sharing them" and "to bear or put up with someone or something not especially liked."
 - This attitude is basically what Paul expressed in 1 Corinthians 13:7 when he said that love "endureth all things."
 - The Bible says, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." (Romans 12:18) We are told to "receive ye one another, as Christ also received us." (Romans 15:7)
 - The Word of God makes it clear how Christians are to act toward each other and toward those outside the faith: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10)
- Traditional tolerance is perfectly compatible with such scriptural commands because the traditional understanding of tolerance has meant:
 - respecting and protecting the legitimate rights of others, even those with whom you disagree and those who are different from you. ("everyone has a right to his own opinion")
 - listening to and learning from other perspectives, cultures and backgrounds.
 - living peaceably alongside others, in spite of differences.
 - accepting other people, regardless of their race, creed, nationality, or sex.
- Traditional tolerance values, respects and accepts the individual WITHOUT NECESSARILY approving of or participating in his or her beliefs or behavior.
- Traditional tolerance differentiates between what a person thinks or does and the person himself.

THE NEW TOLERANCE

- However, most of the time when you hear the word "tolerance" used today – by schoolteachers, news anchors, government officials, activists, celebrities, perhaps even by ministers – it almost never refers to traditional tolerance but to the "new tolerance."
- The new tolerance may sound like traditional tolerance, but it is vastly different. It is based on the unbiblical belief that "truth is relative to the community in which a person participates. And since there are many human communities, there are necessarily many different truths." (Stanley Grenz)
- "The definition of new ... tolerance is that every individual's beliefs, values, lifestyle, and perception of truth claims are equal ... There is no hierarchy of truth. Your beliefs and my beliefs are equal, and all truth is relative." (Thomas Helmbock)

- This view is reflected in such off-heard statements as:
 - “No one has the right to tell me what’s right or wrong.”
 - “It’s wrong to try to impose your beliefs or morals on someone else.”
 - “I have the right to do whatever I want as long as I’m not hurting anyone.”
 - “You have to do what you think is right.”
 - “You have your value system and I have mine.”
 - “I don’t feel the same way.”
 - “Look ... that’s YOUR opinion.”

- Such views are not the exception today, even among Christian young people. An extensive study revealed that 57% of the youth in evangelical churches already believe that “what is wrong for one person is not necessarily wrong for someone else.” Nearly 80% of 18 to 34 year-olds believe there is “no unchanging ethical standard of right and wrong.”

- The new tolerance is an insidious danger which may damage communication between you and your children, expose you to severe criticism, make you legally liable in some courtrooms, or cost you your job. Consider the following examples ...
 - Shannon Berry, a first grader at Bayshore Elementary School in Bradenton, Florida, began talking to a classmate at recess about their mutual faith in Jesus Christ. A teacher, over-hearing the conversation, reprimanded them, telling them that they were “not allowed to talk about Jesus at school.”
 - A third-grade teacher in Selkirk, New York, stopped a child from reading the Bible in her free time. The crying child was threatened and told never to bring the forbidden book to school again.
 - A nine-year-old schoolboy in Virginia responded to the question, “What do you do when you are afraid?” with the answer, “Pray.” He was told that his response was inappropriate and therefore could not be added to the list with the other students’ contributions.
 - Fourth grader Raymond Raines made the mistake of bowing his head over his lunch to whisper a silent prayer. That act resulted in a trip to the principal’s office and a warning that he would be disciplined if he tried to pray again – even silently.
 - Several students at a California community college were called “ignorant” and told to leave their physics class because they stated their belief in the scientific evidences for Creation.
 - A hospital employee in Texas was ordered to undergo psychoanalysis because of her “religious speech” to one of her supervisors.
 - Jerrold Warner, a professor at Arizona Western College in Scottsdale, Arizona, had received glowing annual reviews until he became involved in the Christian Student Union. He received notice shortly afterwards that his contract would not be renewed.
 - Beverly Schnell wanted to find a tenant to help her remodel her hundred-year-old home in return for lower rent. She placed an ad for a “mature Christian handyman.” Government officials decreed her ad to be a clear case of sexual and religious discrimination. Rather than an eight dollar fee, her ad carried an eight thousand dollar fine.

- HOW CAN SUCH CRUELTY AND INJUSTICE BE CARRIED OUT IN THE NAME OF TOLERANCE? HOW CAN PEOPLE WHO PREACH TOLERANCE BE GUILTY OF SUCH INTOLERANCE? IT’S RIDICULOUS, RIGHT? NOT WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND WHERE THEIR “DOCTRINE OF TOLERANCE” IS COMING FROM!

- It is not enough today to “live and let live.” It is not enough to assert another person’s right to believe or say what he thinks is right. In order to be truly tolerant, you must now give your approval, endorsement and sincere support to their beliefs ... AND BEHAVIORS!

- THIS UNDERMINES THE VERY ESSENCE AND MEANING OF ABSOLUTE TRUTH!

- Did you know that there is a growing consensus of thought in our society that it is improper to condemn the Chinese leaders who massacred dissenting students in Tiananmen Square, the Nazis who systematically butchered six million Jews, or those countries that allow child slave labor or the killing of unwanted children? They feel it is not anyone's place to make such a "moral judgment."
- In contrast to traditional tolerance, which asserts that everyone has an equal right to believe or say what he THINKS is right, the new tolerance says that what every individual believes or says IS equally right. All values are equal. All lifestyles are equal. All truth claims are equal. **BUT ...**
 - **THE LAW OF NON-CONTRADICTION** (BASIC LOGIC) insists that two contradictory ideas cannot both be true. Hinduism teaches that when a soul dies it becomes reincarnated in another form; Islam (among others) asserts that souls spend eternity in heaven or hell. They are not equally true!
 - **THE BIBLE** MAKES IT CLEAR THAT ALL VALUES, BELIEFS, LIFESTYLES AND TRUTH CLAIMS ARE NOT EQUAL! It teaches that the God of the Bible is the true God (Jeremiah 10:10), that all His words are true (Psalm 119:160), and that if something is not right in GOD'S SIGHT, it is wrong (Deuteronomy 6:18). This is not just the view of Hebrew, Christian or Western culture – it is truth, according to the God who rules over all cultures!
- The basic premise of the new tolerance is that there is no difference between who a person is and that person's beliefs, behavior, culture or lifestyle. Written as an equation, it would look like this: **WHAT I AM = WHAT I DO**
- Therefore, if you express any disagreement with someone's beliefs, say that their behavior is wrong, or can't accept their lifestyle, you're judging and being intolerant of THEM! In other words, if you don't approve of a person's lifestyle, you don't LOVE THE PERSON.
- **But Scripture does not teach that what we do is equal to who we are!** When Isaiah wrote, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God" (Isaiah 59:2), he made a clear distinction between who we are and what we do (our iniquities).
- **Praise God that what we do is not the same as who we are**, for otherwise God could not have separated our sins from us and thrown them into the sea of his forgetfulness! (Micah 7:18-19)

THE PROBLEM IN SOCIETY

- In a society that regards all values, beliefs, lifestyles and truth claims as equally valid, there can be only one universal virtue – TOLERANCE. And if tolerance is the cardinal virtue, then there can be only one evil – INTOLERANCE. That is exactly the attitude we are seeing today!
- Dr. Frederick Hill – "It is the mission of public schools not to tolerate intolerances."
- Leslie Armour – "Our idea is that to be a virtuous citizen is to be one who tolerates everything except intolerance."
- United Nations Declaration of Principles On Tolerance – "Tolerance ... involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism." (Isn't it ironic that the proponents of the new tolerance are so dogmatic about dogmatism and so absolute in their opposition to absolutism?)
- In other words, any system that believes in ABSOLUTE TRUTH is by definition guilty of intolerance! You don't even have to say anything. If you even THINK there is an absolute truth, then you are intolerant, and thus an appropriate object of intolerance!
- To the modernist, nonagreement is phobia, nonconformity is hate, and conviction is fanaticism.
- This is why the proponents of toleration have no problem being intolerant towards Christians, because we believe in Biblical truth, one God, man's sinfulness, and the evangelism of other faiths.
- John Woodbridge – "Jesus' claim that he is the way, the truth, and the life makes politically correct moderns gag. It is the ultimate heresy."

THE PROBLEM IN THE CHURCH

- The spirit of the “new tolerance” has in great measure infiltrated the church of the last days. That is why people have the false ideas that “all interpretations of Scripture are equal” and “to tell someone their belief or behavior is wrong is being judgmental.” But the Bible contains ABSOLUTE TRUTH!
- “The meaning of a text never changes. Our first goal [in Bible study] is to discover this fixed thing. In contrast, the significance of that text to me and others is very fluid and flexible. By confusing these two aspects of the interpretation process, we evangelicals approach the Bible with an interpretive relativism. If it means one thing to you and something contradictory to me, we have no ultimate court of appeals.” (Walt Russell)
- The question is not “what does it mean to me?” but “what does it mean?” and “how do I apply it to me?” The meaning of the Bible is not DECIDED by the reader, but DISCERNED by him!
- Paul did say “the servant of the Lord must not strive,” but he also said we must confront “those that oppose themselves ... that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.”
- **Vance Havner** “The New Testament Church was an intolerant church. At once we throw ourselves open to a broadside of protest. ‘Intolerant’ is a scandalous word to use these days, for if there is anything that is in style among our ‘progressive’ churches it is that word ‘tolerance.’ You would think that intolerance was the unpardonable sin. We are majoring as never in all church history on being broad-minded. That we have become so broad we have become also pitifully shallow never seems to disturb us. We must ‘broaden or bust.’ Of course, some experts in tolerance can be amazingly intolerant of those who do not share their broad-mindedness, but that does not disturb them either.” **G.K. Chesterton** “Tolerance is a virtue of a man without convictions.”

THE PROBLEM IN THE INDIVIDUAL

- The spirit of tolerance has also corrupted many Christians, who believe “my opinion is just as valid as anyone else’s – I will live for God as I think best.” **But the Bible is NOT a “tolerant book”!**
- Others tolerate personal attitudes and sins, thinking “that’s just the way I am – I can’t change.”
- The spirit of the age says “My sin is not a big deal” but the Word says “You must be delivered!”