

“Tolerance vs Grace” - 1 Corinthians 10:23-33
Pastor Burt Garwood – June 4, 2017

Do you feel like everyone can have their own beliefs unless they conflict with your beliefs? There is a new mindset among secularists that is intolerant of anything that goes against their beliefs. They tell everyone to be tolerant. But they themselves are not tolerant.

Ravi Zacharias: “Instead of free speech, someone coined the term hate speech” to define anyone’s words that go against your personal moral code or belief system. Before we knew it, people were being accused of hate speech for simply speaking about their belief system.

- Tolerance has become a moral conviction that allows people to make choices without the threat of ridicule, exclusion, or punishment. “I do what I want to do, and don’t you tell me I can’t.” If anyone questions you, then they are intolerant.
- Choices are now justified under the word of Tolerance instead of measured up against God’s plumb line for absolute truth found in the Bible. Anyone who drops an absolute truth into the discussion is considered intolerant.
- If each person can decide their own moral code, you just gave every person the right to justify anything.

READ: 1 Corinthians 10:23-24 & Matthew 22:37 & 39

- God created us with the ability to choose how we want to live. It means that we have a personal freedom and rights. But these are not the only considerations.
- You are either influencing others to love Jesus and follow in his ways, or you are influencing others to follow their own way, with its desires and interests and appetites.
- According to Jesus, we live for God and we follow God’s laws, and how we live affects those around us. Loving God with your heart, soul and mind is not just a feeling, but following God’s commands and will for your life. What message is the world sending to you about your choices?
- The issue is not the absence of moral order in the world, but the erroneous insistence on determining for oneself what is good and evil, despite what we intuitively know to be true...as the law of God is truly written on our hearts.
- God’s truth is that there is a moral standard, defined by our Creator God which he uses to govern the world. God has created his moral code for the protection of his created people. He knows what’s best for us and has our best interests in mind.

Secularists want you not just to accept a person’s choices, but to endorse, and they are targeting anyone who doesn’t agree with them.

- The irony is that those who want tolerance are being intolerant. This double standard works for people who only want their way with no accountability from anyone else.
- Secularists want you to endorse and celebrate a person’s choices and to accept it as normative and not make value judgments on it, and say, “That is a good thing.”

This is wrong because as followers of Jesus, we are called by our Creator God to endorse and celebrate his standards, not the opinions or choices of humanity.

- Everybody has a right to believe what they believe, but that doesn’t mean everything is right, or that we have to endorse or celebrate another person’s choices...because that would mean they are intolerant of our beliefs. We can’t celebrate their choice...at the expense of sacrificing the moral code God gave us to live by.
- You can live however you want because you have a free will. But this doesn’t mean you’ve made the right choices no matter how right those choices might feel.
- You have to ask yourself, “Are my choices in line with God’s design for me? Are my choices in line with God’s commands and moral standards?”

Tolerance has neutered Truth. Grace is the opposite. Grace speaks the truth.

- Within a grace-filled environment, people are free to express their point of view and feel safe doing so, because grace is highly valued.
- The new tolerance is not grace. It is intolerant of anyone opposing their point of view. How is there any grace in that?
- Grace is not tolerance. Tolerance lets people do whatever they want. Grace says, “God loves you just as you are...but it isn’t in your best interest to stay just as you are...because God has something greater in mind for your one life.”
- Grace breathes the hope of a better life, a fuller life, a healed life, a life lived in a right relationship with God. Grace provides a safe environment for repentance and change. Grace embraces the sinner who desires to live for Jesus.
- Grace provides a safe environment for us to fail at breaking bad habits and sinful desires that are contrary to God’s best intentions for us, and to know that Jesus is there to pick us up and try again.
- Grace allows us to lovingly talk through the pros and cons, the truth and consequences.
- Grace happens within the context of a loving, trusting, accountable relationship.
- Tolerance on the other hand, leaves a person to himself. Tolerance does not correct or hold accountable.
- When Cain killed his brother Abel in Genesis 4, God didn’t tolerate Cain’s behavior. God didn’t say, “Do whatever you want Cain. Looks like your opinion won out over Abel’s.” Cain said, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” And God’s answer was “Yes.”
- Tolerance is not defined by absolutes. The grace of God flows from the God who created absolutes. There is an absolute that we get from God and it’s his grace. Grace is not bound by the new definitions of tolerance or intolerance.

Now that Christians are viewed as intolerant and that nothing we say is valuable, how do we change the culture? By offering grace that comes through friendship with Jesus.

- Are we there to devastate the person or win the person? Romans 5:8 “*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” That’s grace. The woman at the well in John 4 said, “come and see the one who knew everything about me...and he didn’t cut me down at the knees...he gave me grace.”

You want people to have an opportunity to sense that love. This will win them to Jesus.