

Tolerant Intolerance

Scripture: Luke 6:27–36; Ephesians 4:2

Code: A316

Post-modernism's veneration of tolerance is its most obvious feature. But the version of "tolerance" peddled by post-modernists is actually a twisted and dangerous corruption of true virtue.

Incidentally, tolerance is never mentioned in the Bible as a virtue, except in the sense of patience, forbearance, and longsuffering (cf. Ephesians 4:2.) In fact, the contemporary notion of tolerance is a pathetically feeble concept compared to the love Scripture commands Christians to show even to their enemies. Jesus said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you" (Luke 6:27-28; cf. vv. 29-36).

When our grandparents spoke of *tolerance* as a virtue, they had something like that in mind. The word used to mean respecting people and treating them kindly even when we believe they are wrong. But the post-modern notion of tolerance means we must never regard anyone else's opinions as "wrong." Biblical tolerance is for people; post-modern tolerance is for ideas.

Accepting every belief as equally valid is hardly a real virtue, but it is about the kind of only "virtue" post-modernism knows anything about. Traditional virtues (including humility, self control, and chastity) are openly scorned—and even regarded as transgressions—in the world of post-modernism.

Predictably, the beatification of post-modern tolerance has had a disastrous effect on real virtue in our society. In this age of tolerance, what was once forbidden is now encouraged. What was once universally deemed immoral is now celebrated. Marital infidelity and divorce have been normalized. Profanity is commonplace. Abortion, homosexuality, and moral perversions of all kinds are championed by large advocacy groups and enthusiastically promoted by the popular media. The post-modern notion of "tolerance" is systematically turning genuine virtue on its head.

Just about the only remaining taboo is the naive and politically incorrect notion that another person's "alternative lifestyle," religion, or different perspective is wrong.

One major exception to that rule stands out starkly: it is OK for post-modernists to be intolerant of those who claim they know the truth—particularly biblical Christians. In fact, those who fancy themselves the leading advocates of tolerance today are often the most outspoken opponents of evangelical Christianity.

Look on the Web, for example, and see what is being said by the self styled champions of "religious tolerance." What you'll find is a great deal of *intolerance* for Bible based Christianity. In fact, some of the most bitterly anti-Christian material on the World Wide Web can be found at sites supposedly promoting religious tolerance.

Why is that? Why does authentic biblical Christianity find such ferocious opposition from people who think they are paragons of *tolerance*? It is because the truth-claims of Scripture—and particularly Jesus' claim to be the only way to God—are diametrically opposed to the fundamental presuppositions of the post-modern mind. The Christian message represents a death blow to the post-modernist worldview.

But as long as Christians are being duped or intimidated into softening the bold claims of Christ and widening the narrow road, the church will make no headway against post-modernism. We need to recover the distinctiveness of the gospel. We need to regain our confidence in the power of God's truth. And we need to proclaim boldly that Christ is the only true hope for the people of this world.

That may not be what people want to hear in this pseudo-tolerant age of post-modernism. But it is true nonetheless. And precisely *because* it is true and the gospel of Christ *is* the only hope for a lost world, it is all the more urgent that we rise above all the voices of confusion in the world and say so.

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