

How to Respond to the Intolerance of 'Tolerance'

A Pennsylvania high school banned a pro-life club but allowed a gay club. There are now more than 900 "Gay-Straight Alliance Clubs" in American schools. Drag queens are reading stories to kindergartners in a New York Public Library.

Does it seem to you that tolerance is our culture's only "truth"?

Last week I wrote a daily article on the question, should a Christian attend a same-sex wedding? My article elicited a wide range of responses. All were gracious; most readers agreed with the position I suggested. However, some took different positions and several asked about attending the wedding of a Christian marrying a non-Christian, a couple who is living together or a divorced couple.

Nearly all of us are affected directly by these issues. In order to discuss them more fully, I wrote a white paper for our website titled simply, "When to Attend A Wedding." I invite you to read the paper and would like to devote this article to a related theme: What is the balance between grace and truth?

We know Christianity is a relationship with God founded on his grace: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). We are all sinners in need of salvation and sanctification. The closer we get to God, the further away we realize we are.

How can we refuse others the grace we have received? How can we be legalistic with their sins when the Lord has been so forgiving of ours? When we consider the way Jesus welcomed tax collectors and lepers and prostitutes into his movement, how

can we do less?

Whether the issue is homosexuality, adultery, divorce or any other moral issue, it feels so “Christian” to offer grace to all without judgment. It seems so right to simply love people and trust God to deal with their issues. After all, the last thing we want is to turn someone from eternal salvation because we were intolerant of them.

But this kind of blanket acceptance and tolerance is hard to find in God’s Word. Remember what happened when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden? When mankind rebelled against God in the time of Noah? When Israel disobeyed His Word in the wilderness?

Open the writings of any biblical prophet, and you’re likely to find a word of warning against the sins of their day. For instance, I just opened my Bible randomly and it fell to Jeremiah 49:31a: “Arise, go up to the nation at ease, that dwells securely, says the Lord.” Read the book of Revelation if you wonder whether our holy God tolerates sin.

Here’s the balance between grace and truth: God’s truth leads us to obedience that positions us to experience God’s grace. The most gracious thing we can do for others, therefore, is to offer them biblical truth. We need to do so with humility in love, but they deserve to know God’s Word on the issues we face.

We are beggars telling beggars where we found bread. Is there a greater privilege?

Note: For more on the subject of marriage and tolerance, see Ryan Denison’s new website article, “A Glimpse Into Our Future?” {eoa}