

Why the ‘New’ Tolerance Is Actually Intolerant

After the release of our book [Real Marriage](#), my wife, Grace, and I had media interviews set up with a number of folks in the mainstream press. But the interview I was most concerned about was with [CNN’s](#) Piers Morgan, who seems to enjoy kicking evangelicals as much as David Beckham likes kicking soccer balls.

A few days prior to my interview, Kirk Cameron had been a guest on the show, and Piers took him to the proverbial woodshed for his biblical views on homosexuality and gay marriage. I decided to handle the show alone, rather than subject my lovely wife to what I was sure would amount to juggling live grenades in front of an international audience.

To be honest, I feared that if Piers Morgan was unkind to my wife, I would lose my cool and our interview would result in a legendary YouTube clip featuring me vaulting over the desk while yelling my dad’s old construction-worker words to extend what the apostle Paul calls “the right hand of fellowship.”

By God’s grace, however, things went well with Piers. He was an enjoyable guy for the most part. We are both Irish, formerly Catholic and stubborn, so it felt familiar. I brought him a nice study Bible, and he thanked me, saying I was the first person to ever give him such a gift. The show was edited fairly, though I was bummed they took out the segment where I told him that one day he would be sitting across the desk from Jesus Christ to answer God’s questions and that he was not ready for that day.

Which Definition of Tolerance?

At one point, our discussion turned to the subject of tolerance. Piers gave a lot of weight to the issue, as do many

in our culture today:

Piers Morgan: Do you think you're a tolerant kind of guy?

Mark Driscoll: I love people very much and—

Morgan: That's not the same thing.

Driscoll: Well, how do you disagree with people that you love? That's a very difficult issue for everybody, but for a pastor in particular, because—

Morgan: But do you preach tolerance?

Driscoll: I've preached that we should love our neighbor, that we should accept—

Morgan: But tolerance. Tolerance in particular.

Driscoll: You keep hammering it. What do you mean by tolerance?

Morgan: Tolerating people who may have a lifestyle or a belief that you don't agree with.

Driscoll: Yes, we have to. When Jesus says, "Love your neighbor," He knows you're not going to agree with all your neighbors, but He wants you to love them, to seek good for them, to care for them.

Our conflict was around the old definition of tolerance (which I hold) and the new definition of tolerance (which he holds). Theologian D.A. Carson explains how the definition of tolerance has changed from accepting that lots of people have different views, some of which are wrong, to agreeing that all views are equally true.

The Old Tolerance vs. the New Tolerance

The old view of tolerance assumed that (1) there is objective truth that can be known; (2) various people, groups and

perspectives each think they know what that objective truth is and (3) as people/groups disagree, dialogue and debate their conflicting views of the truth, everyone involved will have an opportunity to learn, grow, change and possibly arrive together at the truth.

The new tolerance is different from the old tolerance. The new view of tolerance assumes that (1) there is no objective truth that can be known; (2) various people, groups and perspectives do not have the truth but only what they believe to be the truth and (3) various people, groups and perspectives should not argue and debate their disagreements because there is no truth to be discovered, and to assume otherwise only leads to needless conflicts and prejudices.

Absolutely No Absolutes

A few things are perhaps most curious about the new tolerance. One, it denies moral absolutes while holding to the moral absolute that there is no **moral absolute**. I know that's confusing. It's like saying, "There is no such thing as absolute truth"—to which the question should be asked, "So does that mean you're lying when you want us to believe your absolute statement that truth does not exist?" You cannot say absolutely that there are no absolutes. I hope you see that the statement itself saws off the very limb it's sitting on.

Two, the new **tolerance** is dreadfully intolerant. Ask average people arguing that every moral view is equally valid and respectable whether they think it's right for big corporations to destroy the planet, that women at one time could not vote or that people once smoked on airplanes, and see if they are willing to truly welcome, embrace, celebrate and tolerate everyone and everything.

I'm pretty sure if an old guy smoking a cigarette while buying stocks in oil companies and gun makers and bemoaning it was a big mistake to let women learn to read was sitting on a plane

next to a feminist on staff with Greenpeace, she would not defend his equally wise and welcomed alternative lifestyle to the flight attendant who was being **intolerant** for asking him to put out his cigarette.

Morality as Wine Tasting

Today morality is more like wine tasting than banking. In banking, there is a right and wrong answer. If you deposit \$1,000 in a new bank account and a week later try to withdraw \$80, you would not be willing to agree to disagree when the teller says your account is empty.

But we don't see morality like banking anymore. Instead, we see it more like wine tasting. In wine tasting, everyone has their favorite blends and no one is necessarily right or wrong—it all depends on individual palates. No one has the right to declare as an absolute truth that simply because they prefer a specific grape or vintage, it is superior to all other wines.

The problem is, the God of the Bible sees **morality** like banking, not wine tasting. This is why Jesus referred to sins as “debts” in the world's most famous prayer (Matt. 6:12).

Today there are not sins. There is only one sin, and that is calling anything a sin.

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