

Listen, but Do Not Follow (No. 2)

Jesus told his disciples one of the oddest things I have ever read.

**“Therefore pay attention to what they tell you and do it. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they teach.”
—Matthew 23:3 (The NET Bible)**

That’s how I feel when I hear some of the voices of our day.

One of the banner cries of our current society is, “Tolerance.” Did you know that tolerance is taught in the Bible? It is an attribute of love. Let me explain:

The Apostle Paul instructed Christians:

Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves. Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. —Romans 15:1-2 (NASB95)

The simple point is that Christians are at different levels of maturity in their faith. Each one should bear with (tolerate) those who are weaker. More specifically, the word ‘bear’ means *to help carry the load*. So, our task is to help, not just tolerate. (See also Galatians 6:12.)

What about our relationship to those who are not Christians?

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. —Romans 12:18

Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near. —Philippians 4:5

These two verses encourage Christians to treat ALL people, Christians and non-Christians with a spirit of gentleness and with the goal of peace. That certainly involves a tolerant attitude. More specifically, aggressive attitudes that promote anger and encourage verbal or physical combat are not a part of the Christian life.

However...

- ◇ Jesus condemned anger (and murder); lust (and adultery); mistreatment of wives; deceit; personal vengeance; and hate (Matthew 5).
- ◇ Jesus condemned hypocrisy (Matthew 6 & 23).
- ◇ Jesus told the woman who had been publicly humiliated for her adultery to stop sinning (John 8).
- ◇ The Apostle Paul rebuked the Christians in Corinth for tolerating an immoral man (1 Corinthians 5).

Jesus and the New Testament writers clearly stood for love of mankind by promoting peace, help for the needy, justice for all people, etc. Yet, they also stood strongly for the love of God through lives devoted to God in holiness, godly (God-like) behavior, and moral purity as defined by God. Jesus and His disciples never taught the tolerance of sin, as if to say, “*Let’s just close our eyes to sin, and it will be alright.*”

What is all this about???

There are many voices of our day crying, “Tolerance,” claiming that they are echoing the teaching of Jesus. Some who advocate today’s tolerance teaching misapply the love of Jesus to the point that *wrong is right* and *moral impurity is good*. There are some who use ‘tolerance’ to defend their own personal moral choices and lifestyle which are condemned in Scripture. Then, when someone points out the simple teaching of the Bible, they spew the venom of intolerance and cry out, “You can’t judge me!”

Things can get really confusing.

When people speak the truth I can listen, but I will only follow Jesus. How can I discern truth?

My Bible is completely open...is yours?