



## WOW: Word Of the Week

### Tolerance

May 25, 2022

Culturally, tolerance is in. Intolerance is out! Paradoxically, many of those who demand tolerance are intolerant of the consciences and sincere beliefs of those who disagree with them. The culture challenges Christianity, an equally great challenge exists in the church. Is tolerance a virtue? G. K. Chesterton said, "Tolerance is the virtue of the man without convictions." Is tolerance the absence of conviction? Can I be convicted AND tolerant?

Is it possible to be too tolerant? Do we understand what is at stake? Can we find our way forward? A beginning point -- truth is intolerant of all untruth. Truth excludes all contrary claims.

Let us not make the mistake of equating love and tolerance. N. T. Wright correctly observes, "Love is not just tolerance. It's not just distant appreciation. It's a warm sense of, 'I am enjoying the fact that you are you.'" Love is impossible from a distance. No distanced love, no non-relational love. Here is a rich vein to be mined—but that must remain another study for another time.

Look in the concordance, explore various translations, and you will not find "tolerate, tolerant, tolerance" used often in the New Testament. Paul wrote about tolerance in 2 Corinthians 11. The NASB2020 catches the meaning. The Corinthians were so tolerant that they were even tolerating false teachers. Paul says that he is too weak to be so tolerant! Do not miss Paul's sarcasm!

The church must rethink tolerance and love. In the name of tolerance and acceptance...

- Speakers aligned with false ideas and false teachings are invited for special events. (Yes, a speaker may agree not to speak about that subject, but untruths are usually subtle.)
- Study groups use books filled with error and call it a Bible study group, content to study about the Bible rather than studying the Bible. (And often unaware of the error.)
- Challenging unbiblical ideas that are presented is forbidden.

Sadly, too many Christians are tolerant because they do not know what the Bible says, and are little inclined to invest serious study time in finding out. We mostly depend on others—what is preached and taught, what others write. It is time for us to redirect some of our average 20 hours per week of television, plus even more time on social media, and seriously listen to God every day!

I realize that one can be too inflexible—in parenting, in friendships, in failing to forgive, in relationships, in expectations. But many Christians today need a good dose of Paul: I am too weak to be so tolerant when it comes to erroneous teachings. Listen to Paul. I must speak when....

Someone brings a different Jesus.

Someone teaches a different gospel and few can discern the difference.

Someone brings a different spirit and goes unchallenged.

Someone brings a different Spirit and no one notices.

Do you know what you believe? Do you know why you believe it? Do your beliefs agree with Scripture? In a world that preaches tolerance, may we not forget that sometimes what is needed is strength. Paul's sarcasm: I am too weak to be so tolerant!

May God's people also be "too weak to say nothing, too weak to let untruth go unchallenged." May our actions, attitudes, and words always align with and advance God's truth.