

John 17

“15 I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to **keep them from the evil one**. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also **have sent them into the world.**”

We are to be in but not of the world.

John 17

“22 And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; **that they may be one, just as We are one**; 23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.”

We are to be united yet distinct.

1 Corinthians 3

“3 for you are still fleshly. **For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?** 4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?”

1 Corinthians 5:5

“I have decided to **deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh**, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”

The church in Corinth

Not engaged in **Culture Wars** Too engaged in **Civil Wars**



A healthy congregation cultivates
Christian community

without compromising its

1.

2.

distinct diverse

standards

“body life”

Church discipline addresses two issues

disrespect for

1.
distinct standards

2.
diverse “body life”

1 Corinthians 5:9

“I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;”

Titus 3:10

“Reject a factious man after a first and second warning”

Congregations tend to be of two types depending on how they picture God.

Law



“God is Holy”

Be sure that everyone believes and behaves properly

Grace



“God is Love”

Be sure that everyone shows grace and mercy

How we experience God shapes our personal lives and our church culture.

Permissiveness

Rigidity

Celebrate

Tolerate

Condemn

Ephesians 4

“1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Tolerance assumes an ultimate standard.

Tolerance is a moral virtue between two vices.

Soft mindedness

Narrow mindedness

Tolerates too much

Tolerates too little

Stands for nothing, falls for anything

Equates personal preferences with God's mandates

What we demand, tolerate, and condemn reveals a lot about our view of God.

Demand

Tolerate

Condemn

Truth of the Gospel

Differences on secondary issues

Violation of core beliefs

Christian virtues

Differing style preferences

Violation of core behaviors

Two toxic church cultures

Permissive

Tolerates (celebrates) too much in the name of Grace

Condemn

Rigid

Tolerates too little in the name of Holiness

Celebrate

Tolerate

A healthy congregation knows how to graciously tolerate a lot of stuff without compromising doctrinal & behavioral standards.

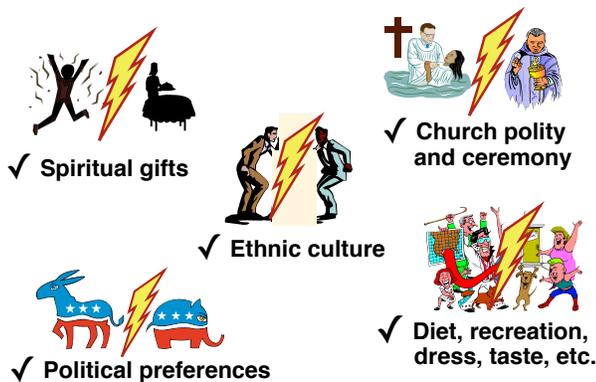


Four reasons for Christian tolerance on a number of issues.

1. God does not want unwilling worship. We need to give room for people to disagree with us.
2. We see as in a glass dimly (1 Cor.13:12). No one has the whole picture clearly in view.
3. We are in process. Our views may change as we mature and become better informed.
4. God is forbearing with us (Rom.2:4, 3:25) and we are exhorted to forbear with each other (Eph.4:2, Col.3:13).

Rom.14:5 "One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind."

Some areas where tolerance is needed



1 Corinthians 12:13

"⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶ And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. ⁷ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. . . ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many."

All congregations should respect the need for each of these functions and they should respect the fact that churches may have differing strengths.



Churches have different distinctives.

They tend to use their distinctives as a measure of orthodoxy.

They tend to use their distinctives as the measure of other churches.



Two toxic postures of dysfunctional congregations

Independence

- Personal boundaries that are too strong and narrow
- Refusing to recognize God's hand in human leadership
- Exalting personal discernment above community discernment

CODEPENDENCE

- Personal boundaries that are too weak
- Faith in the human leader as God's infallible representatives
- Sacrifice personal discernment in the name of loyalty & unity

Signs of healthy interdependence between a congregation and its leaders

- ✓ The Body of Christ is **working** as a body.
- ✓ **Communication** is open, honest, loving, and fearless.
- ✓ There is mutual **respect** between leaders and congregation that comes from listening, loyalty, and love.
- ✓ Leadership **authority** comes by example not by manipulation or power plays.

Two distorted views of Christian unity

Pluralism

- Radical relativism
- There are few standards.
- Everyone does what is right in their own eyes.

UNIFORMITY

- Comprehensive conformity
- Everything is standardized.
- Everyone is a clone of the human leader.

Five reasons Christian diversity is a blessing.

1. It reflects the true nature of God and the whole Body of Christ.
2. It challenges us to discern the role of human culture in our views of the kingdom of God.
3. It compensates for our weaknesses and blind spots.
4. It enables us to exercise certain characteristics of Godliness - forbearance, grace, etc.
5. It enables us to minister with sensitivity and power to the whole world.

1 Corinthians 12:13 "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

Spiritual "Unity"
does not mean uniformity
 (agreement in all matters)
nor does it mean pluralism
 (removal of all standards)

but
a shared identity & purpose with a freedom to celebrate diversity of perspectives, preferences, and passions on peripheral matters.