



## How Do We Truthfully Tolerate<sub>(Part 2)</sub>

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"Don't Laugh at Me" sent ripples through the culture in 1999 and led to a Country Music Award nomination for "Song of the Year." That same year another well-known musical group recorded the song with some additional lyrics. Here is a snippet with the addition:

I'm fat, I'm thin, I'm short, I'm tall  
I'm deaf, I'm blind, yes, I think in a way, we're all  
I'm black, I'm white and I am brown  
I'm Christian, I'm Jewish, and I am Muslim  
I'm gay, I'm lesbian, I'm American Indian  
I'm very, very young, I'm quite aged  
I'm very wealthy, I'm very, very poor

Don't laugh at me  
Don't call me names  
Don't get your pleasure from my pain  
In God's eyes we're all the same  
Someday we'll all have perfect wings  
Don't laugh at me

This song speaks to a need in our present culture of prejudice and hate. In fact, this song, including the addition, is used as part of a "tolerance" education program by Education World, a subsidiary of one of the largest providers of learning management solutions in the world. (Footnote 1: Education World)

I can relate to this song, especially when reflecting on my teen years. Having divorced parents, I often felt taunted and weak to the blows of insulting peers. There was little refuge. I wanted others to realize that I did not choose my lot in life, but it was handed to me by the poor choices of others. If anything, I needed restoration, not humiliation. I believe most people can relate to these experiences in some way. The bullies sometimes seem to have the last word. This song speaks well to that issue.

But in trying to speak to a need, the song over-speaks itself. The categories listed in this song range from ethnicity, to religion, to morality, to economics, to age, to body shapes. But the problem enters when it equates the conditions of each of these. This is evident in the last lines, "In God's eyes we're all the same/Someday we'll all have perfect

wings." That statement smuggles in the idea that all the categories listed previously do not ultimately matter. If you reflect on this in light of yesterday's Slice, you will see this is a problem. Instead of merely speaking against abuses, the song has overstepped its bounds and made blurry judgments about morality and religion.

While we should not be laughing at people who disagree with us or are different from us, we should also not consider that God smiles happily down on all belief systems and certain immoral decisions. Ethnicity and economics are indifferent to the most important ideas in life. Morality and religion are not.

I believe that when people often talk about "tolerance" they are meaning "love." And when we speak out about confusion over tolerance, some people only hear, "I don't care about love." This would be a false dichotomy.

What is "love?" It is "willing the good of another." How can I will someone's good, if goodness is divorced from truth? Truth, by definition, is what reality is like. It is not invented to suppress others. It is something that needs to be discovered for the benefit of us all. This is why one songwriter can say,

"There's no point in pointing fingers, unless you're pointing to the truth." (Footnote 2: Rich Mullins, "Brother's Keeper.") The New Testament says this clearly when it says, "Love rejoices in the truth" (see 1 Corinthians 13:6). There is safety and restoration in the truth. And we know that to correct a child for hurting his sibling is a proper thing to do, not only because the sibling is crying, but because truth has been violated. We want our children to live the best way possible, and that can only be done by living in the way they were created to live.

So what do we do with "tolerance"? I believe the Apostle Paul summed up our civic duty in Romans 13. He says, "He who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments... are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:8-10).

Many have ignored the Christian message, not because it isn't true, but because it has been accompanied by name-calling and disrespect. Paul teaches us that to laugh at our neighbor or to call him names is not walking in our proper civic duty. Notice, that he does not say we must agree with our neighbor in order to love him or her. Rather, we are

to love, no matter what. And the only way we do this is by being a lighthouse to her so that she can walk in accordance with God's grand design.

Let us lay aside the misconception to regard some cases of morality indifferently or all religions the same. And let us speak out with meekness, kindness, compassion, honesty, and truthfulness. Let us show dignity to the lost by meeting and treating them in the name and character of Jesus Christ. When truth remains the handmaiden of love, both accomplish the purpose each was intended to bear.

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