

Threading the Needle: Not Tolerating Sin, But Helping Those In Sin

One of the greatest challenges for Christians is: finding the balance between standing firmly against sin and showing compassion to those who are struggling with it. On the one hand, the Bible is clear that we cannot tolerate or excuse sin. Paul told the Corinthians to *"purge out the old leaven"* (1 Corinthians 5:7) and not to glory in tolerating immorality. Sin destroys souls, and to remain silent or indifferent is to show neither love for God nor love for the people involved. At the same time, Paul told the Galatians to *"restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted"* (Galatians 6:1). Christians must be people who both oppose sin **AND** help the sinner.

On the other hand, we must never forget that sinners are the very people that Jesus came to save, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."* (Matthew 9:12). Paul reminded Titus that *"we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived"* (Titus 3:3).

Threading this needle means we:

- **Stand against sin clearly.** We call sin what it is, without softening it. When a brother or sister engages in sin, we can't say, "it's not a big deal." Sin is serious, but our words should still *"always be with grace, seasoned with salt"* (Colossians 4:6).
- **Show patience and mercy.** Change takes time. Just as God is *"longsuffering toward us"* (2 Peter 3:9), we must walk alongside others as they strive to overcome their faults.
- **Offer help with a path forward.** It's always appropriate to remind a brother or sister that's caught up in sin of the truth that, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)
- **Stay humble.** Remember that we too, depend on God's grace, and we too, could *"be overtaken in a fault"* (Galatians 6:1) if we fail to stay on guard.

That is the needle we must thread: never tolerate sin but always extend a helping hand to those who want to overcome it. Truth without love is harsh. Love without truth is empty. But truth spoken in love (Ephesians 4:15) brings healing and hope.

- by Josh McCord

Hiding Behind a Hypocrite

The finger of indignation, with a touch of smugness, has been pointed many times at a brother or sister who fell short of what they should be. "If that's what a Christian is, then I want no part of it," says the accompanying voice.

But the fact there are hypocrites in the church provides no justification or hope for the sinner outside the church. It is an exceedingly foolish argument. Think about it. The hypocrite is wrong and will be condemned for it. He is lost, and without repentance will be forever lost. So the sinner who feigns to be repelled by such hypocrisy turns around and does what guarantees that he will share a lost eternity with the hypocrite. He does not break rank with him; he has in fact joined him.

Their difference is not one of substance, but of taste. It is the silly and vain idea that he may be wrong and a sinner, but at least his sin is not as bad as that of the hypocrite. And in so rationalizing he becomes one with the hypocrite in serving that which is evil and vile.

The bottom line: the professed Christian's sin, no matter how ugly and repulsive it may be, is no justification for you to deliberately refuse to obey the Lord.

- by Jere E. Frost

Convenient Preaching

Christians are being tried and tested for their love of truth. Many are courageously standing for that which they know to be right, while others, not studying the Bible for themselves, are swept

away by the pleasant and fair speeches of teachers and preachers who seek only to scratch itching ears with "great swelling words, showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage." (Jude 16) Myriad of Christians are confusing the difference between convictions and conveniences. They conveniently stand for doctrine which is most popular, receiving the "praise of men," rather than standing for doctrine of Christ by conviction, being rewarded with the "praise of God." (John 12:43) Such an attitude is manifested by the failure to teach against worldliness, looseness and laxity in moral living, and by putting emphasis on number and size rather than spiritual stature. Many seem afraid to condemn anything, but stand ready to praise everything. We have watered down our convictions, sweetened our dispositions, and become so sophisticated with worldly wisdom and intoxicated with our "place under the sun" of prominence in the religious world that we stand powerless in the face of error and evil.

- by Robert Harkrider

"You Have To Pick Your Battles"

We hear an expression fairly often these days: "You have to pick your battles." That concept is applied in politics, in business matters, in personal relationship situations, etc. While there may be some fair applications in those realms, we are seriously concerned when we hear folks saying this about religious issues. Even some of our own brethren are picking up this faulty notion.

The expression 'pick you battles' suggests that on some things you have to compromise. Perhaps it's not what you really want or think is right and best, but sometimes you just have to let the other fella have his way. What about this idea?

First, if it is a doctrinal matter, there is no 'picking' for us to do. God has already revealed the truth on the subject and faithful Christians cannot choose to ignore a situation where others are violating His will. If it is an issue of truth and righteousness, we must follow the pattern set by the apostle Paul. When false teachers attempted to push their error, Paul said *"we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you"* (Galatians 2:5). We ought to do likewise – the battle is engaged already – there is no 'picking' for us to do.

When the issue is not doctrinal, but rather an opinion or judgment matter, there's no 'picking of battles' here either -- because there should be no battle at all! In this sort of scenario we ought to *"be subject one to one to another, and be clothed with humility"* (1 Peter 5:5). So many church problems could be avoided if all had this attitude.

"You have to pick your battles"? – no, not in service to God. There is no place for that approach here. Think!

- by Greg Gwin