



How aware is a fish of the water in which it swims? Not very. Similarly, we swim in cultural water everyday, often without realization or examination.

To complicate the matter, we live in a very polarizing time. American culture demands that we adhere to certain cultural dogmas, but it takes great thoughtfulness and courage to stop and consider whether or not these dogmas have Biblical basis or truth.

In this eight-week series, we will examine eight prevalent messages our culture preaches that, for better or worse, create the “water in which we swim” everyday. We will discuss the benefits and drawbacks of each when considered in light of the gospel.

*NOTE: There may be slight changes to what follows, primarily in the main passage(s) used. However, the ones shared below will be a great start and very applicable for the sermons.*

## The (In)Tolerance Narrative

### A Brief Explanation:



We need to accept any thought, unless we don't like that thought.



Discuss the explanation above



Penn Jillette – Why is Tolerance Condescending? <https://youtu.be/lpNRw7snmGM> (Warning: Contains Swearing)



Discuss the video above

? Where do you see our culture's (in)tolerance narrative play out in your daily life? How does it influence you and the different people around you?



### **Romans 12:9-21 (NIV)**

<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.  
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."  
<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

A quote about burning coals:

"The picture of putting coals on a person's head initially sounds like a picture of causing burning pain, but it really is not. Instead, it seems to be a picture of stirring up the coals of a fire to rouse it back to life again. It is a picture of stirring within a person a response of remorse, when they see your kindness in the face of their meanness. This must also be the sense of Paul's passage - we cause our enemies to be remorseful for their actions toward us, and in doing so we overcome evil by doing good."<sup>1</sup>



Discuss the passage above.

? God hates sin, the Bible is clear on that. How should we regard sin? How should we regard people who sin?



#### **Acts 7:51-8:3 (NIV)**

<sup>51</sup> "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! <sup>52</sup> Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— <sup>53</sup> you who have received the law that was given through angels but back not obeyed it."

<sup>54</sup> When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup> But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

<sup>57</sup> At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, <sup>58</sup> dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

<sup>59</sup> While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

<sup>60</sup> Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.egrc.net/articles/Rock/Puzzling\\_Passages/BurningCoals.html](http://www.egrc.net/articles/Rock/Puzzling_Passages/BurningCoals.html)

8 On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. <sup>2</sup> Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. <sup>3</sup> But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.



Discuss the passage above.

? This passage describes the brutality of religious intolerance. What circumstances, beliefs, and human failings led to this?



### 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (NIV)

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. <sup>12</sup> For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

<sup>13</sup> And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.



Discuss the passage above.

? How are we called to love? Does this apply to all people or just those who agree with us?

? How does the (in)tolerance narrative our culture preaches line up with teaching from God's Word? Where do they "agree"? Where do they "disagree"?

? How would our hearts and world look different if tolerance were redefined in this way: "I love you. I disagree with you. However, I wish you the best and am glad you are my neighbor. But, I still disagree with you"?

? Are there places in your heart or life that you need to extend gospel tolerance to others?

? Are there people in your life with whom you disagree that you need to reach out to, seek forgiveness from, or reconcile with?

### **For Further Thought**

Interview with D. A. Carson and his book about intolerance: [https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/the\\_intolerance\\_of\\_tolerance/](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/the_intolerance_of_tolerance/)