

"Judge Not"?

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10-05-25

Pro 29:25 *"Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe." -the idolatry of human approval. It transfers the reverence that belongs to God alone*

Pro 14:27 *The fear / Rever of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death.*

John 12:42-43 *...many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved human praise more than praise from God.*

Traditional definition: "Tolerance is the practice of allowing or enduring views, behaviors, or lifestyles that one disagrees with, disapproves of, or even finds offensive—without resorting to coercion or harm."

Key elements of classical tolerance:

- Rooted in freedom of conscience, religion, and speech.
- Assumed deep disagreement on moral or ideological grounds.
- Involved restraint, not endorsement.
- Originates from Latin *tolerare* meaning "to bear, to endure."

Tolerance Redefined: "You must not only allow for but also affirm, validate, celebrate, and agree with my choices, identity, or lifestyle—or you're intolerant."

New implications:

- Disagreement = hate.
 - Silence = violence.
 - Dissent = bigotry.
 - Moral judgment = oppression.
- (This shift is particularly evident in discussions around sexuality, gender identity, religion, politics, and lifestyle choices.)

Natasha Crane in her book **Faithfully Different** writes:

The modern mind, the modern secular way of thinking, which even many "Christians" have adopted, include these four basic truths about life.

1. First, happiness is the ultimate goal.
2. Second, feelings are the ultimate guide.
3. Third, judging is the ultimate sin.

4. fourth, God is the ultimate assumption. (*In other words, we can't know whether God exists or not. "So don't tell me that you know what He wants for or from me."*)

"Judge not lest you be judged!"

Matt 7:1-6

1. Judge: to evaluate (Luke 17: I Cor 5)
2. Judge: punish, to sentence, to condemn (1 Cor 4:5; Rom 14:10)

Eph 4:15 *speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

Prov 27:6 *Faithful are the wounds of a friend;*

"Fraternity will almost always overcome theology"
– **Dr. Norman Gieser**

Community Groups; every group is different here are some questions to consider for use in yours.

Icebreakers:

- The sermon discussed the "fear of man" as a trap. Can you recall a time in your life when the desire for approval influenced your decisions? How did it affect you?
- When was the last time you felt pressure to go along with something just to avoid standing out or being judged? (At work, with family, on social media?)

Discussion Questions:

1. **Pro 29:25** - *"The fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe."*

Pro 14:27 *The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death.*

- How do these verses challenge the way we seek approval and affirmation in our daily lives?
- What does it mean to have a fear of the Lord, and how does this differ from fearing man?
- Reflect on the statement, "The fear of man is a snare." How does this concept relate to the challenges Christians face when speaking truth in today's society?

2. The talk notes included the difference between traditional and modern definitions of tolerance.

- How do you interpret this difference, and what impact do you see it having on Christian beliefs and practices?
- Reflecting on Natasha Crane's four truths of modern secular thinking, how do you see these beliefs influencing society and even some Christian circles today?

3. Matt 7:1-5 - Read about the speck and the log.

- What insights do we gain about self-reflection and humility before addressing others' faults?

4. Pastor Mark emphasized the importance of speaking truth in love. Can you share a personal experience where you found this balance challenging?

Eph 4:15 ...speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

5. The 1st video clip at the end of the service referred to love as being forthright, even if it risks disapproval.

- How do you discern when it is time to speak up about your convictions, and what does that look like in practice?

6. What is your reaction to the 2nd video clip and the young lady's testimony about the way her desire for her peer's approval, and the influence of media and school "educators", impacted her faith?

- What has been your observation with regard to the quote that *"fraternity can often overcome theology"*?
- How can we, as parents, a group, a church create a supportive environment that strengthens our faith in the face of the culture's messaging?
- How does the call to "tend to the people in your life that God has given you to shepherd" influence how you interact with family and friends?

Contemplating the closing prayer's theme, how can you cultivate a greater sense of "fear and reverence for God" in your daily walk?