

Can't we all just get along?

You've probably seen this iconic symbol on the back of many cars. It's the famous "coexist" bumper sticker. When I first saw this, I thought it was certainly clever, but I was also disturbed by the message.



What's the general message? In most cases, I believe people are wishing we could just all get along. What's wrong with that message?

On one hand... nothing. I think we should be able to get along with those who hold different beliefs. Romans 12:18 states, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." When you think about it, the majority of people on the planet have a different beliefs than you. Are you supposed to eliminate them or force them to submit to your view? Obviously not. That certainly isn't Scriptural.

On the other hand, the intended message behind this symbol isn't so much that we should just "get along", but rather we should acknowledge that all beliefs are worthy of equal respect, are equally valid or even are all basically the same. This view, however, is problematic. Offering just one example for now, Mormons believe in multiple gods (i.e. God the Father is God and Jesus is God... just not the same God, and we ourselves can become gods, etc.). Christians believe in one and only one God, manifest in the Trinity. Hindus believe in one supreme being expressed in perhaps millions of manifestations. Atheists believe there are no gods at all. How could they possibly all be right?

A number of years ago the big push in society (regarding variant views) was to be "tolerant". That sounds great and I believe we all need some level of this in our effort to function successfully as a society. However, "tolerance" today has transformed into acceptance and then morphed even further into "celebration". We've gone from simply being willing to "get along", to being somewhat forced to not only accept, but actually celebrate, affirm and condone other views, including what we clearly see as being extremely aberrant behavior. We are now being pressured to approve of those whose beliefs are directly contrary to God's Word and stand by as these other groups are granted special privilege and protected status because of their beliefs. If it were correctly stated, the dictate would be, "Tolerate all views... except for Christianity!"

It is not my intention in this article to discuss those religions that might seek to harm others. It should go without saying that while it's reasonable to be tolerant of other views, it's certainly not sensible to just "give a pass" to proactively violent groups.

Scripture clearly teaches there is only one way to Heaven: "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6) The Bible also says, "Test all things; hold fast what is good." (1 Thessalonians 5:21) It further warns us that "There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12)

Question of the Month

Here's another point to consider. For those who believe most (if not all) of the existing beliefs are equally valid ways to God, then it was absolutely ludicrous for Jesus to have allowed Himself to be tortured and crucified, knowing people could be saved apart from this extreme sacrifice. That would effectively demote Jesus from being the Son of God to just another fool.

Here's my advice:

- Study God's Word to know the Truth
- Get to know others and sincerely learn what it is they actually believe, so you are in a better position to know what questions to ask. Do this in a very gracious manner to show genuine care for them, as opposed to just wanting to win an argument.
- Be patient as God uses the Holy Spirit (through your testimony and your sharing of actual Scripture) to remove the spiritual blinders they have, peacefully coexisting along the way.

If you are dealing with someone who makes it virtually impossible to have a rational, respectful conversation, you will have to pray about whether or not God wants you to hang in there, or move on to someone else who would be more receptive to the truth.

So the next time you see someone with a "coexist" bumper sticker, if you are able, ask them what led them to putting it on their car. It's a great conversation starter and God can use it in a mighty way!

Much more could be shared regarding this topic, but our space is always limited in these brief articles.

If you have any questions related to this month's question or any other issue, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@TheStartingPointProject.com.