

"The church does the most for the world when the church is least like the world."

—Warren W. Wiersbe

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Facilitating Lawlessness

As I neared the intersection of two four-lane streets on my way to work a few days ago, I was suddenly forced to jump on my brakes. In front of my truck rolled a line of a half-dozen cars preparing to make a left turn, but the driver of the SUV at the head of line had unexpectedly stopped—despite the green arrow—to allow a man standing at the right-hand corner to cross the street in front of her! This was against the light, against all the horns blaring behind her, against the laws of the road, against all reason!

At first, I thought she was distracted by something: talking on her cell phone, eating her breakfast, applying makeup, reading a newspaper, scolding a child, or something similar. However, when she finally turned, allowing me to see into her SUV better, none of those things appeared to have been a factor. She had simply decided to halt all traffic to let the man cross five lanes of a large, big-city intersection against the dictates of traffic law.

What prompted her to do this? The man had made no effort to cross against the light. If she had just made her left turn, the traffic would have cleared quickly, the signal would have changed in about a minute, and the man could have crossed safely and legally. Instead, she risked being nailed in her rear

bumper or causing a similar accident among the vehicles behind her. Happily, all the drivers behind her were alert, and nothing untoward occurred.

In thinking about this incident since then, it appears to be a kind of metaphor for life in America these days. We are checking ourselves unnecessarily and dangerously to tolerate—even facilitate—others' immoral or unethical behaviors. We are too eager to display our permissiveness in face of all we know to be against it, from traditional, biblical morality to plain old common sense.

Perhaps the most easily seen example is this nation's tolerance of homosexuality, a practice thoroughly condemned both by Scripture and—not long ago—by American churches and society in general. Most Americans, though, have chosen to support supposed Constitutional rights and freedoms over real biblical standards, ignoring historical societal decay after the acceptance of homosexuality, as well as obvious public health consequences. They have, in effect, given sodomy a pass despite everything to the contrary.

We also tolerate public theft of the citizenry by our very own government, and many vote to accelerate it every few years! Politicians make long careers out of promising largesse from the local, state, or national treasury, bribing the people with the heavily taxed earnings of their fellow citizens. This national sin—ever-growing entitlements and pork-barrel spending—has landed the United States in a precarious financial position, one that can only grow worse. Counting future guaranteed outlays from Social Security and Medicare, total indebtedness in America is now upwards of \$60 *trillion*! Most Americans are willing to tolerate such fiscal incompetence and indiscretion as long as it works in their favor.

The Western world has made a [god](#) out of the concept of tolerance. If nothing else, it has become a chief virtue of modern man, but how is it virtuous to accept destructive behaviors? Would we tolerate sharks in our swimming pools? A little arsenic in our drinking water? Dynamite among our firewood? Do we allow automobile manufacturers to sell us unsafe vehicles? Are we happy to let unlicensed doctors and dentists ply their trades on our bodies? Why, then, are we so eager to tolerate moral and ethical dangers in our society?

Wise Solomon says something similar concerning [adultery](#): "Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent" ([Proverbs 6:27-29](#)). If we tolerate [sin](#), there will be consequences. Society as a whole will certainly decline, and as individuals, we and our children will "be burned."

Unlike the lady in the SUV who facilitated an illegal deed, putting others in danger, we need to follow the rules of the road. For Christians, the rules are laid down in God's Word, and the safest, most beneficial course for all along the road of life is to put them into constant practice.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Forbearance](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

We are much too sensitive and litigious, greatly lacking in forbearance, tolerance and patience. A major part of God's character is forbearance, patiently putting up with over 700 years of covenant breaking by our ancestors, patiently refraining from giving them what they deserved. God put up with the foibles of Abraham, Samson, David, Job, and many others, allowing them space to repent and build character. We need to develop the godly trait of forbearance, having the capacity to have mercy on others while we wait for them to change. Forbearance when applied to our brethren leads to unity; lack of forbearance leads to scattering.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Judgment, Tolerance, and Correction](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

A common mantra, even among Christians, is "You shouldn't judge." Is this

a biblical concept? John Ritenbaugh exposes the fallacy of this belief and explains how righteous judgment should be done.

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