

Just recently, this headline appeared in our media: *“The city of Oak Lawn, Illinois has banned any recognition of Christmas in their schools. The ban came after a Muslim woman complained.”* And then there was also the recent story reporting that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) told an 85 year old resident that she could not place an angel on the top of her Christmas tree by her door since “any religious symbol or religious words associated with Christmas” are banned in “common areas” of housing operated by HUD. Fortunately, because of the actions of thousands of people, that woman is now allowed to have the angel on her tree. HUD’s decision was rescinded because others took a stand. They chose *not* to turn the other cheek in this instance but to let those in positions of authority know that they simply *would not tolerate* this action.

There are many other situations and/or circumstances we could list here that face our society on a daily basis — not to mention the instances each of *us* has faced individually that required us to make a decision whether or not *we* would turn the other cheek or earnestly contend. As a nation, America is quite possibly approaching a crossroads that could determine the future freedom we have as Christians to freely express our faith in God and to practice that faith in whatever way we see fit. The Voice of the Martyrs — an organization dedicated to aiding Christians who are being persecuted for their faith in Christ — states: “This year an estimated 160,000 believers will die at the hands of their oppressors and over 200 million will be persecuted, arrested, tortured, beaten or jailed. In many nations it is illegal to own a Bible, share your faith, change your faith or allow children under 18 to attend a religious service.” They currently list 48 different countries where believers are *frequently* persecuted for their faith. As Americans, *we have no assurance* that this nation will *always* retain the freedom to practice and display our Christianity. If Jesus had chosen to *not* make it *perfectly clear* that He *would not tolerate* the money changers in the temple, that local temple might have become the first “big box store” instead of a place of worship.

We must realize that love for our enemy means that we do anything we can to bring them closer to God and His saving grace. That may sometimes mean that we have to tell those who are so vehemently opposed to Christianity and a belief in the one true God that they’re wrong. Our love for God must be *stronger* than our fear that someone may not like us very much if we oppose their actions and behaviors.

“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:37-39 NIV)

*“Diligence” is a privately funded publication of:
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DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

A ministry of Dennis and Sherri Owens

Volume 6

November 15, 2007

Issue 20

Turn The Other Cheek — Always?

“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also...” (Luke 6:27-29 NIV)

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” (Romans 12:18 NIV)

We’ve all heard these verses many time and as Christians, try our best to live by them. But what about *these* verses?

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” (Matthew 10:34 NIV)

“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” (Jude 1:3 NASB)

“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way” (Luke 6:26 NASB)

*“Not bring peace but a sword.”? — “Contend earnestly...”? — “Woe to you when all men speak well of you.”? That doesn’t sound like turning the other cheek and walking away from every circumstance and situation in which we find ourselves. As Christians, it may sometimes be difficult to know exactly *when* we should “turn the other cheek” and when we should “contend earnestly” — knowing that the latter may sometimes cause others to not like us very well.*

There are plenty of times in the Scriptures when Jesus didn’t seem to turn the other cheek — perhaps we could even say that He didn’t ignore problems in order to keep the peace. For example, Jesus called the Pharisees a “brood of vipers” (and numerous *other* not so nice names) in Matthew 23:23-33. *That* probably didn’t go over very well with those people. Some Christians today would probably have told Him that He simply wasn’t showing love toward His enemy by calling them names. So why would He have done that? Jesus surely knew all there was to know about how to show love toward others. Yet that’s what He did. And — we could probably also say that, in so many word, He told the woman at the well that she was lying to Him about her lifestyle (John 4:18). Some Christians today would say that He shouldn’t have confronted and embarrassed her that way.

If these examples still leave us with doubts as to whether or not Jesus often confronted things that were wrong, consider the incident in the temple with the money changers.

“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,” (Matthew 21:12 KJV)

Just saying that Jesus *confronted* the money changers is probably an understatement of this incident. Not only did He not just turn the other cheek and walk away from the offenders, we could probably say that He made it *perfectly clear* to them that He was *not going to tolerate* that kind of inappropriate behavior in the temple. He left *no doubt* in their minds as to where He stood in that particular situation.

So as Christians, how do we know when we should make it *perfectly clear* as to how we feel about certain things going on in our society and when we should just turn the other cheek?

We’re going to list some situations and circumstances that recently took place in our society and *you* decide how *you* believe Christians *should* react to them. When is it appropriate for Christians to turn the other cheek and when is it appropriate to make it *perfectly clear* that we’re *not going to tolerate* certain kinds of behavior?

The situation or circumstance —

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — After an outbreak of pregnancies among middle school girls, education officials in this city have decided to allow a school health center to make birth control pills available to girls as young as 11 ... King Middle School will become the first middle school in Maine to make a full range of contraceptives available, including birth control and patches. Condoms have been available at King’s health center since 2000. (www.cnn.com)

Someone responded —

On November 8, 2007, the *American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ)* made the following announcement concerning the above behavior.

“Today we will begin preparations to file a lawsuit to remove a troubling policy in one Maine school district where prescription contraceptives are distributed to students as young as 11 without parental knowledge or consent. The Portland School Committees decision not to reconsider this policy means we will now examine all legal avenues and prepare to file a lawsuit challenging the policy that ... also violates Maine law by not reporting all illegal sexual activity involving children 13 years old or younger. (www.aclj.org)

Looks like *this* organization decided to make it *perfectly clear* that this behavior *would not be tolerated* — at least by *them*. What would *you* decide to do — or not do?

Here’s another situation or circumstance —

The Department of Veterans Affairs has issued a ban that removes any mention of God from Honor Guard Flag Folding Ceremonies at veterans’ funerals. ... A complaint was filed by one objecting person. That person objected because, as

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the memo states, ‘some of those scripts are religious in nature and also ascribe meaning to the individual folds put in the flag.’” (www.aclj.org)

Someone responded —

“The federal government Tuesday stepped back from its ban prohibiting members of volunteer Memorial Honor Detail from reciting a popular flag-folding ritual at military graveyards,... The decision ... came after national media and a dozen members of Congress demanded the prohibition be lifted. (www.pe.com)

Evidently, a *lot* of people decided to make it *perfectly clear* that this behavior *would not be tolerated* — at least by *them*. What would *you* decide to do — or not do?

A few more situations or circumstances —

“The University of Michigan at Dearborn is planning to build foot baths for Muslim students who wash their feet before prayer. An elementary school in San Diego created an extra recess period for Muslim pupils to pray. At George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., Muslim students using a ‘meditation space’ laid out Muslim prayer rugs and separated men and women in accordance with their Islamic beliefs. Critics see a double standard and an organized attempt to push public conformance with Islamic law. ... Barry Lynn, of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, says however that the law is murky on these expressions of faith. And the American Civil Liberties Union says overt religious symbols like crucifixes are not legal, but whether Muslim foot baths and prayer rugs fall into that category is not clear.” (www.usatoday.com)

We normally wouldn’t quote from bloggers on the internet but the following posts are especially interesting on this subject since the titles of the blogs are “the humanist” and “friendly atheist.” It seems that even humanists and atheists must occasionally feel the necessity to stand up against situations that are inherently unfair to Christians. Their responses —

“What’s to stop Catholics from demanding the installation of holy water fonts by every classroom door? If I was a member of the Church of Cognizance, which advocates the use of marijuana as a sacrament, would the school pay to build a special smoking room for my religious ritual? The University should certainly allow for the building of foot baths, so that Muslim students right to practice their religion is not violated. But the Muslim community, or other private donors, should pay for it.” (http://blog.the humanist.com)

The “friendly atheist” then responded to the above blog —

“You start permanently changing your architecture for one religious group, you have to do it for all. After all, what’s the difference between a foot bath used as part of a ritual and a fountain that can be used for a baptism? ... Considering there are 2,000 different religious groups in America, that’s a very slippery slope.” (Pingback from Friendly Atheist — http://friendly atheist.com)

Even these humanist and atheist bloggers decided to make it *perfectly clear* that this behavior *should not be tolerated*. What would *you* decide to do — or not do?
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