

**Critical Spirit or Message from God**  
Tolerance and Intolerance Part 2  
The New Strategy for Filling The Pews  
By Wayne Vasilenko

© 2018 Wayne J Vasilenko / Selah Life Ministries

Part two of the series “Tolerance and Intolerance” has the potential to ruffle a lot of feathers! To many it will appear as being written by some frustrated old man venting as to how things ought to go back to the way they were. Perhaps I do have some frustrations I am venting, but my intension is deeper than just that. I feel a lot of churches and Christians are asleep. I have been a Christian since 1972 and have been exposed to a lot of different teachings and doctrines. I realize that it’s not always about numbers, but I have always been curious as to why some churches grow rapidly and are very effective in making Disciples, while others seem to be stagnant and seemingly “Dead.” I have had an interest in Prophecy ever since the author Hal Lindsey wrote the book “The Late Great Planet Earth.” What caught my attention in that book was the fact that God provided signs for us to watch for by which we could gage how close His return is in time. As I studied those signs over the years, I found that just as Jesus told His disciples, these signs will take place, and as it got closer to His second coming, they would be more intense, more rapid, and more obvious to His people (Jews and Gentiles alike). Many churches don’t talk much about prophecy these days; one of the main reasons for this is that there have been so many “Date Setters” and “Crackpots” in the past it just opens a can of worms for the apologist. We could spend an entire lifetime talking about all of the predictions that never materialized, predictions made by “Hap- Hazard” students of the bible. However, we cannot deny that Jesus did indeed make an issue of what He referred to as “The signs of the Times;” so if this old man is frustrated about anything it is this... Too many Churches and too many Christians seem to be either ignoring or denying the signs that Jesus referred to, signs that are happening all around us daily, and what is the *most frustrating* is that according to the signs so prevalent around us, we don’t have a whole lot of time left before the Trumpet sounds. While this should invoke an increasing sense of urgency concerning evangelism, many churches seem to have no such sense, and are engaging in programs and teachings that reflect no urgency whatsoever, time consuming programs with little chance of enlightening the unsaved as to pending events that not only could, but *will* affect their place in eternity. Consider this... there are no more prophesies that must take place before the catching up or what is referred to as “The Rapture of the Church” takes place! According to the signs that Jesus spoke about, and the signs of the Old Testament prophets, we are without a doubt living in “The End Times!” It is long overdue for the Church to start conveying a sense of urgency! There are some preachers doing so, but they represent a small fraction in comparison to the pastors who are in essence gambling with the eternal lives of countless people attending their churches. The remainder of this teaching will be dedicated to pointing out what I consider to be some of what I consider to be mistakes I have seen, and see happening in the church, mistakes that could cause people to in the end, “Fall Short of the Glory of God,” all for lack of time remaining on the prophetic clock which is indeed ticking. Please consider what I have to say, not as me being against the churches I might refer to, but rather as my observations and concerns concerning the churches mission here on earth. Many people will chalk off what I have to say as coming from just another “Critical Spirit” causing problems for churches or people; but the way I see it is that it is about time the question is asked, “What on Earth is the modern Church Doing, and What Happened to Evangelism?”

In Part one of this series I talked about how our modern society, while making a big issue of *Tolerance*, is becoming perhaps the most *Intolerant* society the world has ever known. Consider this... not only are we dealing with intolerance in secular society, but I attempted to show how intolerance has

**Critical Spirit or Message from God**  
Tolerance and Intolerance Part 2  
The New Strategy for Filling The Pews  
By Wayne Vasilenko

© 2018 Wayne J Vasilenko / Selah Life Ministries

made its way into the church. Not only is the church being attacked from the outside, but it is also succumbing to attacks from within. The surprising aspect of this is that in many cases the attacks within the church are directed at Born Again Believers (Church Members) who are trying to help the church, not at people who are trying to destroy it! Ironically this amounts to the so-called “Heathens” receiving more tolerance within the church than the church members (Born Again Believers) themselves! In essence, people either new to, or in some cases opposed to the Christian Church, are the people controlling how it operates. I also mentioned previously that I had personally heard two different Pastors in the recent past tell their congregations that if someone in their church doesn’t like the way things are done or questions the teachings or doctrines, they should get out... go find another church! This to me sounds a bit *intolerant*, don’t you think? Our society is evolving at an alarming pace; for example, today people can hold in their hands more computing power than a Main Frame Computer from back in the 1970’s. I used to work for N.C.R. (National Cash Register, an early player in business computers) and I helped assemble a computer that took up an entire room; people these days have more computing power in their wrist watch than that computer had! We take the changes, dare I say again, the “evolution” of technology in stride as normal these days. Most of the changes we see are generally good for society but not all of them. Likewise, the big push for tolerance is generally good, but it is being misused so as to favor one segment of society over another. Tolerance is one of God’s greatest attributes, if it weren’t for God’s tolerance, this planet we live on would have been toast a long time ago. But as history illustrates, even God’s tolerance has its limits, just ask some of the people from Sodom and Gomorrah if that were possible. I repeat again what I mentioned in Part 1 of this series, that is the fact that Christianity, *contrary to what you see or hear on Social and Main Stream Media*, is indeed the most tolerant faith in the world. In this writing we will continue to explore whether Christianity is perhaps becoming too tolerant and/or too “Worldly” in its effort to attract followers, while at the same time becoming intolerant towards the legitimate questions or concerns of its own church members! I will now point out just a few of the things I have observed over the years.

## **Modern Church Strategies for Filling the Pews**

### Worship or Entertainment

Very few praise and worship groups sing traditional hymns like the ones that I remember when I was a young Christian back in the 70’s and 80’s... you know, songs that you can actually sing along with! Most of the songs played these days are not what would be classified as, “Congregational Songs,” they are songs that were meant to be listened to or sung as a solo, *not* to be sung as a congregational Praise & Worship song. I have a little experience with this as I was in a Gospel Music group for about three years in my “younger days.” We played at many different churches and always had the congregation participate at some point in our presentation. Most of our program consisted of group songs, solos, or duets; these were interspersed with the testimonies of various group members. Don’t get me wrong, I don’t have a problem with most of modern Christian music, but it simply isn’t intended to be used as it is being used! Look around during Praise and Worship... not too many people are singing! Why is that?

**Critical Spirit or Message from God**  
Tolerance and Intolerance Part 2  
The New Strategy for Filling The Pews  
By Wayne Vasilenko

© 2018 Wayne J Vasilenko / Selah Life Ministries

It is because most songs being used are not what used to be called “Congregational Songs,” they are not meant to be sung in such a manner. So for people like me, *being an older Christian*, I feel frustrated at times as everyone caters to the young, at any cost... anything to draw in the young. Never mind the fact that unless you listen to modern Christian music on a regular basis, there is little chance of many people knowing the tune, much less singing along in a spirit of praise and worship. Most Christians might catch a few tunes on a Christian radio station on the way to and from work now and then, but let’s face it... a virtual handful listen to “Christian Music” on a regular basis! If you want more people to participate in ‘Praise and Worship’ use songs that were written for that purpose; not intricate songs that may take hours to master even for the more musically inclined! I understand that we shouldn’t force the young to endure music they don’t particularly care for, but what about the older folks? If I have to tolerate music that in some cases I don’t particularly care for, shouldn’t the younger folks reciprocate by “tolerating” some of the older or traditional music as well? Isn’t this the true spirit of “tolerance?” The bottom line is this... when I face challenges, it’s the old songs and hymns that come to mind, not the modern stuff. I have always said concerning Christian music, “It’s the words that matter, not the beat... not the type or style of music!” Listen to some of the music by the late Keith Green and you will see what I mean... just about every one of his songs could be used as a prayer. Go on You Tube and listen to his album, “No Compromise.” Participation in Praise and Worship would **quadruple** simply by using simpler songs which were written as congregational songs! This is a simple fix, but it seems that most churches or music directors just don’t get it!

While it is important to attract the younger people to church, the question is, “do we do it through entertainment, or through the Word of God?” Do we allow our churches to become more “Worldly” in order to attract new young people, or do we show our church to be separate from the world and all the temptations and lusts it has to offer? Here is one final example: In one church I attended in the past, a “Christian Music Group” came to give a concert. This group was comprised of four young women, very attractive young women I might add. The concert was to be in the evening, however during the morning service the group members gave their testimonies and sang a few songs which included some dance routines... they were very talented and their testimonies seemed sincere. (Please note... I am not against dancing as a form of Praise and Worship)

**Psalm 150:4 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!

The evening of the concert the church was packed and the attendance, especially among the men, both young and old, was seemingly unprecedented! The music started and while people came expecting a program honoring God, what they got was in my opinion more likened to a Madonna concert! As the concert progressed I observed the audience and even commented to my wife, that I doubted that any of the men and boys in the room heard one lyric of any song or one word of testimony, but their eyes were glued to that stage, or should I say on those pretty young women and their occasionally seductive dance moves! I freely admit that I had to force myself to look away as some very evil thoughts began to emerge in my mind prompted by what I was seeing.

**Critical Spirit or Message from God**  
Tolerance and Intolerance Part 2  
The New Strategy for Filling The Pews  
By Wayne Vasilenko

© 2018 Wayne J Vasilenko / Selah Life Ministries

Is this the way to attract people to the Lord? I think not... nevertheless I have seen other so-called Christian concerts just as bad – if not worse since then. I can go on, but I think most of you reading this get the point. *Selah*

**Romans 12:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*

### Come and get a free oil change!

I know of another church that that offered people a free oil change for their car in hopes of having the opportunity to share the gospel with them! They would set up in the church parking lot and offer passers-by a free oil change! While helping the needy is a Nobel cause, I don't think offering something like this for nothing is going to result in a lot of people turning to the Lord or even opportunities to share the gospel. The church I used to attend when I was first saved did one thing better than any other church I have attended since... they taught people how to be a (tactful) effective witness for Jesus. When I say tactful, I mean that we were taught how to lovingly present the gospel to people at every opportunity without being "Pushy" or overbearing. The pastor of that church told us that he felt that his job was not to be the evangelist leading people to the Lord, but rather to teach and equip us, (his congregation) to lead others to the Lord! You might think that giving someone a free oil change is a way of getting the opportunity to share the Gospel, but it is my opinion that in the long run what you'll end up with is a long line of "Freeloaders" that will pretend to listen just to get something for nothing! It's like people that go to those free dinners or free weekend getaways where you have to endure one or two hours of high pressure salespeople trying to get you to buy a condo that you can only use one week out of the year. There are many people that do this on a regular basis; they have no intention of buying or investing, they are just taking advantage of others by wasting their time and resources to get something for nothing! A small church doesn't have the resources to do these kinds of things, at least not for long; and the return on such an endeavor will always be disappointing in relation to the effort, expense, and liability. Liability you might ask? Yes... if you change the oil in someone's car, even if you do it for free... guess what will happen if something happens to that motor afterwards? Make sure you have some good lawyers in your congregation before going down this road. If someone is having financial problems sure it's okay to pay to have their oil changed, but I don't recall Jesus or any of His disciples ever doing anything like this in order to have a chance to share the Gospel. (And yes... I do know they didn't have cars back in those days!)

### Free Ice Cream!

In another church I attended more recently, they came up with another strategy... "Community Service" which is one of this churches stated causes... to be a "Servant to the Community." Once again, "A Nobel Cause" but what is the return on this effort when the "Great Commission" given to us by Jesus is to "Make Disciples?"

**Critical Spirit or Message from God**  
Tolerance and Intolerance Part 2  
The New Strategy for Filling The Pews  
By Wayne Vasilenko

© 2018 Wayne J Vasilenko / Selah Life Ministries

The strategy in this case is to simply serve free ice cream at various events, not making a point of inviting people to the church involved, not to have the goal to engage people with the gospel, but simply to do a nice thing for people at the event to let people know we care about them. Again, there is nothing wrong with doing nice things for people! We should always be willing to do nice things for people; but unless there is a plan for evangelism, the chances of sparking a conversation that would help lead someone to the Lord is *Slim to None!* I was aware of three times this church did this while I attended, and only one time was it brought out that one of the servers had an opportunity to mention God or the Bible! There was no invitation to the church, there was no effort of building a relationship to follow up with a presentation of the gospel... so what is the point! Yes... we as Christians are called to be servants to others, but how are we to be servants? Jesus said the following:

**Matthew 28:19-20 (AMP)**

<sup>19</sup> Go then and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> Teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you all the days (perpetually, uniformly, and on every occasion), to the [very] close *and* consummation of the age. *Amen (so let it be).*

What are the odds of fulfilling this commission by handing someone an ice cream cone and sending them on their way? Once again, I would say... Slim to None! Please hear me... there is nothing wrong with doing things like this! My main concern is do we have time for this? What is the goal and what are the results? Are we effectively spreading the Gospel or simply contributing to the obesity problem. Are we forming relationships with individuals to share the Gospel with them or just after some form of recognition within the community hoping that by chance someone will remember who served them ice cream? Again I say, "Nice Gesture" but not an effective way to fulfill Jesus' commission He gave to us. To those people whose feathers may have been ruffled by this lesson, this was not directed at any particular church or person. I do not question the sincerity of anyone's beliefs. My goal was to make my readers aware that time is short, and we have to not only to be bold in proclaiming the Gospel, but we also have to be as effective as possible. I will bring this to a close for now and in the next part of this series talk about some things that were done in the past which were, and still are, effective ways to spread the Gospel... Please join us again.

**1 Corinthians 7:29-31 (NLT2)**

<sup>29</sup> But let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short. So from now on, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage. <sup>30</sup> Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their joy or their possessions. <sup>31</sup> Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away.