

Narrow-Minded Christianity

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Living in a society that proudly boasts of its open-mindedness toward a variety of immoral practices, it is no wonder people often see Christians as being narrow-minded. However, this should be no insult toward those who are truly seeking to follow God, for His word is what many today would consider "narrow-minded." The apostle Paul wrote of the same problem in his day:

For the word of the cross is **foolishness** to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18 (Emphasis Mine)

To those outside of Christ looking in, what we believe and practice is narrow-minded foolishness. For example, the Bible authorizes marriage **ONLY** between a man and a woman (Gen. 2:24-25; Matt. 19:4; 1 Cor. 7:2; 1 Peter 3:1). Such a teaching is now considered "narrow-minded" to a society that has done something no other in the history of man has done: legalized same-sex marriages.

The Bible describes God as the Creator of the world (Gen. 1:1). Yet, according to many, if a person accepts the Bible's account of creation, they are ignorant and narrow-minded.

The Bible describes homosexuality as a sin (Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9). Today, for one to believe that such a practice is sinful makes them a narrow-minded person. The world does not understand why we cannot join them in celebrating their lifestyle choices. Our refusal to condone their practices is often interpreted as hate. However, in reality it is anything but hate!

The sinful world fails to see that as Christians we love the souls of every person, regardless of their sin. We seek their spiritual well-being by helping them see their need for Jesus Christ. Could such a broad love really be called narrow-minded? In reality, for us to approve of their lifestyle choices would not be an act of love. We would dishonestly make them think that all is well with their soul.

While society seeing us as narrow-minded is not really much of a surprise, there are religious people today who see our beliefs as members of the Lord's church, as being narrow-minded.

To those who dangerously add to, and take away from the word of God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6), those who strictly follow the word of God will be seen as narrow-minded. Well then, I am proud to be considered "narrow-minded." The New Testament says:

There is **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6 (Emphasis Mine)

Though these are the words of an inspired apostle, many would see the strict limitation of "one" as narrow-minded. Hence, sincere religious people argue there is more than one body and more than one way.

The Bible says there is salvation in NO OTHER NAME but Jesus (Acts 4:12). Again, that sounds narrow-minded to many people.

Because we believe baptism is absolutely essential for salvation we are called narrow-minded. This, despite numerous passages that indicate the need for baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 8:36; 22:16; Gal. 3:27; etc.). To a religious world that prides itself on being open-minded, to require baptism as an essential element of salvation, is simply narrow-minded Christianity.

Because we sing without the use of mechanical instruments of music, we are considered narrow-minded. Yet, those who use instruments of music can find no New Testament authority to do so. Even the history of the church lacks examples of their use until multiple centuries after the time of the apostles. Their use today is really a matter of open-mindedness in defiance of clear biblical authority.

This same type of open-minded approach to interpreting the Scriptures has found various religious groups with women preachers and elders. While there is much for women to do in the local church, there are some Divinely imposed limitations (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3; 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Tim. 3:1ff). Those who strictly adhere to these limitations are considered narrow-minded.

At this point, some may wonder, "I thought being open-minded was a good quality?" Yes, there is a value to being open-minded. However, there is a distinction that needs to be made in understanding exactly what being open-minded as Christians really means.

Some see open-mindedness as validating ANY thought, idea, or system of belief. "Think outside the box" is the plea. In other words, you are open and accepting of all, even if it may lack biblical authority. It really amounts to thinking outside of the Scriptures! It is this "outside the box" type of open-mindedness that has led many to stray from the word of God. It was a problem with the churches of Galatia, so that Paul wrote to them:

I am amazed that you are **so quickly deserting** Him who called you by the grace of Christ, **for a different gospel**; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!
Galatians 1:6-8 (Emphasis Mine)

The idea of keeping an open mind, in terms of accepting everything and everyone, is a message that comes more from the world than from God. Rather than possessing a mind that is open to all, the Bible instructs us to have a guarded mind.

Watch over your heart with all diligence,
For from it flow the springs of life.
Proverbs 4:23 (Emphasis Mine)

To watch over our heart is to guard our mind. To guard our mind is a cautious open-mindedness. In the same way, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 (Emphasis Mine)

To examine everything carefully is to have a guarded mind. This means we are not to be blindly accepting of anything and everything. In this way, the Bereans are a great example for us to consider. The Bible says of them:

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, **examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.**

Acts 17:11 (Emphasis Mine)

The Bereans were not simply "open-minded." They possessed a guarded mind that allowed them to listen to what was said, and more importantly, to examine it against the Scriptures.

Again, if living by the Scriptures, and testing what we hear against the word of God makes us narrow-minded, then let us proudly be narrow-minded in the eyes of others. Apparently, Jesus was also narrow-minded, for He said:

“Enter through the **narrow** gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is **narrow** that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Matthew 7:13-14 (Emphasis Mine)

Sadly, many today seem to believe there is a broad way that leads to eternal life. However, Jesus is very clear: the way is narrow. Later, in the same discourse, Jesus stated:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

Matthew 7:21 (Emphasis Mine)

Today, to teach that entrance into the kingdom of heaven only comes by doing the will of the Father, is to be narrow-minded in the eyes of many.

I suppose one could also call the apostle Paul narrow-minded, for he said this of religious people who had a great zeal for God:

Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

Romans 10:1-2

Despite their zeal for God, Paul says his Jewish brethren according to the flesh were lost. Today, this would be called narrow-minded thinking.

Way back in the first century, Paul had to battle the danger of open-minded religious practices. He warned Timothy:

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: **preach the word**; be ready in season and out of season; **reprove, rebuke, exhort**, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when **they will not endure sound doctrine**; but wanting to have their ears tickled, **they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth** and will turn aside to myths.

2 Timothy 4:1-4 (Emphasis Mine)

In every age there have always been those who would not endure sound doctrine. There will always be those who will not accept there is only one way, or that there are limitations on what the church can or cannot do.

If the people of the world, and various religious groups, want to consider us narrow-minded, we are in good company! By their own beliefs, Jesus and Paul would be considered the same. Let us always stay true to the authority of the Scriptures in all we believe and practice. To do so, will keep us on the narrow way.