

## Gain a Biblical Understanding with T-O-L-E-R-A-N-C-E

The word “tolerance” has taken on many meanings today. Some believe tolerance means anything goes any which way the world desires. Others take tolerance to a level of intolerance towards anyone who may disagree with their point of view. But what do the scriptures teach us about tolerance?

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### T – Take advantage of every opportunity to be Christ-like

*“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.” (Matthew 11:19).*

Our lives aren’t governed by luck or chance, but rather by the will of God. The Lord allows our interaction and engagement with people who don’t believe in Jesus or who differ in their opinions about matters of the faith. The key to being Christ-like in these situations is to keep your eyes on Christ and not the person. You can have the mind of Christ when depending on the Holy Spirit for direction. For more study read Matthew 11:1-19.

### O – Obey God and His word rather than men

*“Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than human beings!’” (Acts 5:29).*

There will be times in a believer’s life when they will be tested for what they believe about God and the Bible. There are believers who refuse to deny Christ resulting in a risk to their lives, livelihood, and peace. There are rich blessings over those who choose God over men even though they lose out in earthly treasures. Christians must develop an intolerance to any behavior that would cause them to disobey God’s word. For more study read Acts 5:27-42.

### L – Love others as yourself

*“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right” (James 2:8).*

The most intolerant of individuals can recognize true and unconditional love from Christians. Loving those who are intolerant of the Christian faith empowers the believer to love just as Jesus did. The love from God is proactive and real without hypocrisy. Love overcomes a multitude of sins allowing the Lord to penetrate the hardest of hearts. For more study read 1 Corinthians 13.

### E – Expect there to be differences of opinions

*“They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company” (Acts 15:39).*

The Lord uniquely created each of us with our own personalities and preferences; therefore, we won’t always agree with one another. However, this doesn’t mean that we can’t still love and respect each other in spite of our differences. Those who belong to the god of this world may never comprehend the views of Christians—and we must expect that because the wisdom of God is foolishness to the world. For more study read Acts 15:36-41 and 2 Timothy 4:11).

### R – Respect other’s values and opinions with grace

*“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6).*

It’s possible with the help of the Holy Spirit to respect other’s opinions with grace. The ability to rise above personal feelings and treat someone with respect in spite of their intolerance reveals the true measure of spiritual maturity. The Spirit of God will always

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lead the believer towards graceful interaction with the intolerant. Having a mindset of prayer and quietness brings peace in the midst of differences. For more study read Daniel 4:19-37.

### A – Acknowledge that you may suffer for what is right

*“But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened” (1 Peter 3:14).*

Being labeled “intolerant” for your Christian faith is a part of the journey. Suffering is expected when you stand up for what is right according to the word of God. The devil and the world will push you to recant your faith in a loving Father. However, there’s blessing from heaven on the lives of those who stake their faith in Christ without wavering when mistreated. For more study read 2 Corinthians 11:23-12:10.

### N – Never allow bitterness to take root in your heart

*“See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many” (Hebrews 12:15).*

Forgiveness is the tolerance that defines Christian behavior when dealing with those who are intolerant. Bitterness takes root when a believer allows the insults to penetrate their hearts instead of choosing to forgive. Keeping the focus on what God wants for your life will help you to more easily forgive the intolerant and increase your capacity to deal with them. For more study read Matthew 5:43-48 and 1 Thessalonians 5:15.

### C – Call upon God for wisdom and discernment

*“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you” (James 1:5).*

Those who demonstrate true tolerance will seek God’s wisdom and discernment before speaking with people who disagree with them. The wisdom of God digs deeper than surface beliefs and may cause a person to reflect on righteous concepts. It’s wise to demonstrate in words and actions the tolerance or intolerance the Bible teaches. For more study read Daniel 1.

### E – Express your opinion on controversial topics with careful consideration

*“Paul replied, ‘Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains’” (Acts 26:29).*

Believers reveal their tolerance for righteousness by how careful they express their opinions. Talking without thinking or praying causes many Christians to stumble in their response to those who are intolerant towards God and the Bible. Being slow to speak and quick to hear allows us the opportunity to fully understand how to address those who may be in opposition to the truth. For more study read Acts 26.

***“I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22).***

The Christian faith is often misunderstood and we are labeled as “intolerant” to the ways of the world. This is expected as we are sojourners and ambassadors in the world. There is a balance in which we must be patient and tolerant towards people, but intolerant of sinfulness in our own hearts and around us. Always keep in mind that there are lost people needing to hear the truth about Jesus. May we become all things to all people in order that by our words and actions that many will come to know the Lord.

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