



Sermon Discussion Guide

Was Jesus Intolerant? Jesus Makes Headlines – Part 4

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“The Lord isn’t slow about keeping his promises, as some people think he is. In fact, God is patient, because he wants everyone to turn from sin and no one to be lost.” 2 Peter 3:9 (CEV)

Jesus was loving, not tolerant. He called the Pharisees “hypocrites.” Yet our politically correct society would have us be tolerant of many things. Do we judge or are we to be tolerant? We are told to love people and not tolerate sin. Jesus didn’t tolerate thievery, disrupting worship, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, obscuring God and his grace with traditions, leading people astray, sexual immorality, and all other sin. The only perfect person is Jesus. The rest of us need him to redeem us. Let’s look at sin, redemption and judgment through the eyes of our Lord.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” Matthew 23:27-28 (NASB)

1. Why do you think Jesus spoke so strongly against hypocrisy in these verses and in others (Matthew 7:1-5; John 7:24)? What would be the reason he was often much gentler when he spoke with unbelievers? How do you think you should follow Jesus in making true judgments?

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Matthew 22:37 – 38 (NIV)

2. Love is an action, not a feeling. Christians are commanded to love; it is our standard. Why is it so difficult to be loving instead of tolerant? Taking a worldview, list some areas where you feel Christians find it easier to be tolerant instead of loving? Now personalize it: What are the areas in your life where you call evil good and good evil? How can you change this and stand up for the consequences?

So the spies questioned him: “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” He... said to them, “Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?” Luke 20: 21 – 23 (NIV)

3. Whose image is on you? As a group, list ways a Christian can make their life a headline to God. Have someone read back the list. Which area needs improvement in your life? What can you do this week to improve the headline of your life?

“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance...but the day of the Lord will come like a thief...” 2 Peter 3:9-10a (NASB)

4. God is not going to force you into heaven. He is patient, offering a lifetime to choose between heaven and hell, between eternity with Him or in hell. When he returns, the time of choosing will be over. Share with each other the name of one person for whom you will pray for the opportunity to share the truth about Jesus as the solution to hell.

Diving Deeper (optional)

1. Jesus was not tolerant when people were led astray by the Pharisees. Think about people you come in contact with every day. Is there anyone who you might be leading astray by the way you live, or by your attitudes or even by silence about your faith? Ask God what personal changes need to be made.
2. Jesus wants us to be like him. Jesus constantly gave glory to the Lord in his speech, conduct, love, relationships and purity. He did not settle for second-best pathways. Where in your life are you conforming to the world? What small steps can you take to become more like Jesus?

REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.

Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- Briefly share a time when you felt the goodness of God.
- Lead group members to a biblical understanding of tolerance and why a loving God would send people to hell.
- Pray: Father, you alone know the heart of those I come into contact with. Help me love them with your heart so they would choose to come to you and live in your love for eternity. Purify my heart, mind and spirit again. May your Holy Spirit fill me so there is nothing left of me, except you. Help me be the light of your truth to others this week. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God’s wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God’s instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God’s five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn’t. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We’ve designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.