

What Am I Tolerating?

Tolerance defined -

1. A fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, practices, race, religion, nationality, etc., differ from one's own; freedom from bigotry.
2. A fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward opinions and practices that differ from one's own.
3. Interest in and concern for ideas, opinions, practices, etc., foreign to one's own; a liberal, undogmatic viewpoint.
4. The act or capacity of enduring; endurance: *My tolerance of noise is limited.*

Synonyms:

1, 2. patience, sufferance, forbearance; liberality, impartiality, open-mindedness.

TOLERANCE, TOLERATION agree in allowing the right of something that one does not approve. TOLERANCE suggests a liberal spirit toward the views and actions of others: *tolerance toward religious minorities*. TOLERATION implies the allowance or sufferance of conduct with which one is not in accord.



"I will not tolerate that behavior anymore." I remember my mother saying that to me more than once during my formative years. This was not a suggestion. She meant to do something about it had I not gotten the message. What the behavior was is not important to me now. It's the concept of tolerating.

When my mother said she would no longer tolerate my behavior her goal was to let me know that something I was doing no longer worked for her. She was probably, in her infinite wisdom and glory, hoping to correct a behavior that was not going to work for me either outside of adolescence. She had clearly had enough and took action to be free of what could likely be looked at as annoyance.

Tolerations are things we suffer, work around, try to ignore and put up with for a time.

Can you think of something right now that provokes mother's phrase in your life? If it's the behavior of someone close to you or a work colleague you may have to carefully craft what to say and when and how to say it. Sometimes the hard truth is that a person needs to get pink

slipped out of our lives. If you feel it's too hard to talk with said annoyer, ask yourself this question. What is the cost to your psyche and that relationship when you stuff what you feel?

If we are talking something simple, however, like the lock on your door is loose and getting the lock open is a jiggling and wiggling marathon to get the key positioned right-that's a toleration with an easier fix. One you can probably eliminate with a call to a locksmith. (If you've got a handy hubby or sig other, you will tolerate it till they get around to the honey do list.) This is a good time to mention that tolerance is a different concept and welcome in a world where the many variations on a theme of being human live side by side.

Here's a "for instance" of a former toleration. Every morning and most evenings Debby and I sit at our kitchen table. We had moved it out into our garage for a neighborhood garage sale. When it was moved back into the kitchen, it was not level. Finally one day a week ago Debby said, "I can't tolerate this uneven table anymore." I got up, looked for a piece of cardboard to put under one leg. Finding the piece of cardboard I immediately started to place it under one of the legs when I realized that there were screw levelers on each leg. When I turned the screws, the table became level again. Problem solved. It had been a couple of months of living with the unlevel table before anything was done. The moral of this story is something doesn't have to be falling apart before you realize that what you are experiencing is not pleasant anymore.

But there are also situations where tolerance is challenged. This is true especially in the framework of God's Word. Our society offers up various ideologies, lifestyles, and ways of thinking that we are asked to tolerate. Ideologies like evolution, atheism, humanism, pluralism, or any of the religious sects. Lifestyles we are asked to tolerate are couple living with one another before marriage, gay relationships and marriages, abortion, etc. Different mindsets like, "There are not absolute truths," or "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe in something" are presented for us to tolerate. The lists go on and on concerning what Americans are to tolerate and it is imposed upon the Christian as well.

As followers of Jesus we are to be in the world, but not of the world. We are called upon to be patient because love is patient and kind. But, there comes a time where one cannot tolerate what is going on, especially when it is against God's Word.

Martin Luther could not tolerate anymore the Roman Catholic position on sin and forgiveness. When the church began to sell the forgiveness of sins, Luther could no longer tolerate it. He nailed his ninety-five these to the Castle Church in Wittenberg in order to debate the issues that had gone awry within the Catholic Church. His opening line showed concern out of love. These are the opening words: "*Out of love and concern for the truth, and with the object of eliciting it...*"

Luther wanted to discuss the issues in accordance to God's Word and offered an invitation for anyone to come and discuss. Ultimately, Luther's life was threatened, with a warrant for his arrest, dead or alive, was issued.

In the Gospel lesson for today, Jesus addresses the Jews who had believed in him with words of truth. However, their understanding of the truth was far different than that of Jesus. This would ultimately lead to Jesus arrest, sentencing Him to death by crucifixion.

Jesus was not willing to tolerate sin or the outcome of sin, but addressed it. He did so out of love for the sinner. He did so by going the way of the cross to forgive all sinners of their sin against God in thought, word, and deed. So also did the apostles confront sin and untruth as they faced the challenges throughout their ministry to the various ideologies, lifestyles, and philosophies that were prevalent of their day. The truth is the truth in all times and places. God's Word is the truth and Jesus is the living Word of God who is the absolute truth.

What we might think or say is "ok for now" because we are patient with what is happening in the world and all around us will need to be addressed and challenged.

Here's the bottom line of tolerating. These creatures of "ok for now" steal our energy whether you think so or not. Usually, not always, we tolerate things we can change easily. I think we do so because we don't recognize the full weight of those things lurking in our corners, in our circles.

We may say daily we will do something about the missing light bulb over the stove, and say it over and over again until we have to make it happen. What shifts? Awareness I believe. Being aware of what you tolerate or don't tolerate is an exercise of awareness. For some the thought is in the "don't sweat the small stuff" category. For many more of you, the small stuff becomes a bigger problem that can steal energy and focus. Whether my kitchen table is level or not is at times annoying but it pales in comparison to the means of salvation that determines where one will spend life after death.

As Christians we can tolerate many things. However, we cannot tolerate anything that goes against God's Word. How we face the intolerance of this nature is directed by God's Word – with love and respect. We address the sin or the untruth head on, not as judges or with a "better than" attitude, but with care and concern because of our Christian love for one another

As we remember the Reformation, we remember what was not tolerated and how it was addressed. Everyday is a mini reformation as we live in the world but not of it. May God grant us the courage to be bold reformers in the world in which we live.

Amen.