

We are looking at areas of growth and maturity for a Jesus Follower.

Today, look at this piece of the puzzle:

A growing and maturing ability to work with others, especially those different than themselves

There are many different kinds of people in this world. Some are easy to get along with, and others seem to grate on our nerves no matter what. This is even true in the body of Christ. As Christians, we have a responsibility to humble ourselves so that we can interact with and cooperate with many different kinds of people. Biblical discipleship helps equip people to see others through God's eyes and treat others as Christ treats them.

Of course, some people are incredibly challenging to live in peace with. When we come across those people, we can't just ignore them or justify our rudeness because they are so difficult. Before God, we have a responsibility to respond in a Christ-like manner toward them.

Romans 12:18 *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

It's easier to work with and accept others when they are like us when they have the same beliefs as we do. Occasionally we even feel justified to ignore or ridicule those who are not "living up to our standards." God wants us to reach out to those types of individuals without passing judgment on them.

Romans 14:1 *Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.*

Sometimes certain people are so difficult to get along with that it's easy to justify why we shouldn't even waste our time trying. God desires that we take the time to make an effort.

Romans 14:19 *Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*

Often our rejection of others is because we feel superior to them. "Why should we have to put up with the weak?" is a very prevalent mentality. One of the primary roots of this attitude is selfishness. We are called to bear with the failings of those around us who are weaker than we are.

Romans 15:1 *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*

God has given us the perfect example of what it means to accept those who are different than we are—His name is Jesus. We see Jesus working with all different types of people. All you have to do to see how far God will go to accept a totally messed up person is to look in the mirror. At whatever point Jesus has not accepted you, then you are free to not accept another person. Of course, we know that Jesus has always reached out to us with love, acceptance, and forgiveness.

Romans 15:7 *Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*

We can't work with others well if we don't humble ourselves and see everything through God's perspective. Once we see things through God's filters, then we are more motivated to humble ourselves and love others.

Ephesians 4:2 *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

Forgiveness can be difficult because it deals with such deep emotional issues. We can't allow grievances to pile up and affect our relationships with others. People not only do this with individuals but also with groups and races. As Christians, we have a responsibility to forgive others like we have been forgiven—thoroughly and without strings attached.

Colossians 3:13 *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

As Christians, we can do quite a bit to damage the testimony of Christ if we don't learn to work well with those outside of the Body of Christ. Every time we engage those outside of God's church, we have an opportunity—an opportunity to represent Christ well or represent Him poorly. We need to make the most of every opportunity.

Colossians 4:5 *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.*

Unfortunately, in today's culture, Christianity doesn't have the best of reputations. This can change if we, as individual Christians, live lives of servanthood that wins respect instead of selfish lives that lose the respect of others.

1 Thessalonians 4:11,12 *Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.*

Too often Christians are more concerned about their reputation and relationship in the church than they are with their reputations and relationships in the world. If we treat non-Christians with disrespect and rudeness, we have become snared by the enemy's strategy, and we may end up doing more harm than good for the Kingdom.

1 Timothy 3:7 *He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.*

The best way to work with others, especially those who are different than you, is to enter into the relationship with humility.

Titus 3:1,2 *Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.*

The only one who is truly holy is God. God is pure and righteous and is justified if He chose to turn His back on those who don't agree with Him. God's holiness didn't cause Him to turn from us, it caused Him to turn to us. Shunning those who are different, ridiculing those who are lost, judging those who are immature—these are not acts of holiness, they are acts of pride and selfishness.

Hebrews 12:14 *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

Hale Pule Question:

Meditate on the verses above. Ask the Father to show you which of the principles above are the most difficult for you to put into practice. Write out the verse for each one you struggle with and write a prayer based on that verse that you can pray consistently to help you focus on how the Father wants to help you grow in that area. Feel free to share these prayers with a trusted friend who is a Jesus Follower so they can join you in prayer.