IGNORING JESUS’ PRINCIPLES

Roman Emperor Constantine (A.D. 306–337) worked diligently to unite his citizens under one state and one religion, but under Emperor Justinian (A.D. 527–565), the church and state became so interconnected that it’s difficult to distinguish between the two. Justinian relentlessly suppressed every voice that disagreed with Catholicism and deprived every dissenter of basic rights. He required his citizens to abandon all previously held religious beliefs, be baptized, and attend church with their families. The law was displayed in all provincial cities, and all had to observe Sunday as God’s holy day. Those who refused to conform were forced to flee the empire or face severe repercussions.

Christians who were deemed heretics experienced the most relentless persecution under Justinian, whose legal code defined heresy as “all thought and worship contrary to the Catholic and apostolic Church and the orthodox faith.” Church facilities belonging to dissenting congregations were seized and destroyed. Merchants were forbidden from transacting with heretics. All heretics’ goods were subject to seizure at any time. People caught teaching heresy were put to death, and anyone who offered such people refuge shared their punishment. Governors who failed to enforce these laws were heavily fined and removed from office.

Many probably believe such extreme religious intolerance is unlikely to recur in today’s world, but prophecy indicates that certain events in this history will repeat. This week’s lesson explores what Jesus taught about when it is and isn’t appropriate to practice religious intolerance against dissenters.
Write out Matthew 13:24–43 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out verses 24–30. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the passage.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

**Circle** repeated words/ phrases/ideas

**Underline** words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/ phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

What steps can we take to get closer to God’s way of thinking?

Why do you think the professed Christian Church of later centuries forgot this parable’s principles?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/RL03-3
After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks seem to point to overall?

What questions emerge after studying this week’s passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Why is church discipline necessary to maintain the congregation’s spiritual health?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/RL03-4
What relationship do the following verses have with Matthew 13:24–43?

Matthew 10:14–16
Matthew 18:15–20
Matthew 23:37, 38
Matthew 7:12
Luke 22:49–53
John 18:36
Romans 12:17–21

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with the primary passage?

Review your memorized verse from Matthew 13:24–43.
Dealing with Dissenters

What is Jesus saying to you through the main text?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

What are some ways Jesus honored people’s free will?

Prayer Response:

Meditate on the primary passage again and look for where Jesus is.

Read more at www.inversebible.org/RL03-6
Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the chapter, what are some personal applications you are convicted of in your life?

What are some practical applications you must make in your school, family, workplace, and church life?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/RL03-7
Dealing with Dissenters

Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

What have you learned from this week’s lesson that can help you tolerate others whose beliefs differ from yours?

What are some examples of Jesus respecting free will?

How did Jesus make such a large impact without using force?

How can we heal the church’s reputation after all the abuses Christians of the past have committed?

Why does the New Testament provide a protocol for disfellowshipping someone? When should these steps be followed?

Do you think your local church is applying discipline fairly to all members?

How can the church be more successful with winning people who have been disfellowshipped back?

What kind of thinking starts a person down the path of believing they’re doing God's will when they kill people (John 16:2)?