



DISCOVERING TRUE ACCEPTANCE

INTRO

One of the strongest needs found in every person - regardless of their circumstance - is the need to be accepted. We all want to be loved for who we are. When we do not receive this acceptance, we will feel unhappy in our relationships. A lack of acceptance always leads to unhealthy emotions and can even affect our ability to relate to others.

But here is the good news: You and I can truly feel how accepted we are already!

Today, let's learn together and find the greatest acceptance of all.

WARM-UP

Choose one or two questions:

- Acceptance is communicated by more than the words we speak. What are some of the things that others do that communicate acceptance to you personally?
- Do you think God accepts people just the way they are? How do we know? Have you experienced this acceptance personally?

WORD

There are so many people in this world that you might desire to be accepted by. Maybe for you it's a constant battle to be accepted at school or at work. Maybe you long for the acceptance of a certain person on social media, or even in your family.

The reality is that we ALL strive for acceptance, but we want to remind you today that you don't have to fight for the acceptance of people because you already have the acceptance of ONE. His name is JESUS. Because of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross, we don't need to fight for the right to belong. He has already given us full access into God's family. Through Jesus we are accepted by God.

Let's look at the following 3 Bible passages:

(Let several people read out loud.)

1 John 4:10:

This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son {Jesus} as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19:

¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! ¹⁸ And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.

John 6:37-39:

³⁷ However, those the Father has given me {Jesus} will come to me, and I will never reject them.

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will.

³⁹ And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day.

Questions:

How can you tell from these Bible passages that God truly accepts you no matter what you've done, where you come from, or what you are going through?

The best part of God's acceptance of us is that we don't need to work or strive for it. His acceptance has been freely given to us through Jesus.

Think about it this way:

Have you ever gone to a friend's house or to a new place where you wanted to hop on the wifi? Then you know that the password to put in your phone is usually incredibly long with - what seems like - a million numbers and letters, right? You just want to quit before you even start making an effort to type it all in.

BUT: If you have an iPhone and your friend knows the password, all of a sudden, without even trying, the password is automatically in your phone because your friend did the work to put it in already and has shared it with you!

This is a very simplified analogy, of course, but when it comes to our lives, Jesus is that friend! What He did on the cross was the work, and now we have access to everything He has for us.

APPLICATION

Did you know that Jesus didn't always enjoy the acceptance or approval of everyone while He was on earth? In fact, He was despised and rejected by countless people, but He always knew His heavenly Father loved Him. He was sure of who He was, and it gave Him confidence. Everything that Jesus endured and suffered was for our sake. This means, He went through rejection on our behalf so that when we face it, we can go through it and not be damaged by it—or if we've already been damaged, He is the key for complete recovery from rejection. Remember, there will always be people who won't accept you, but their acceptance is NOT what ultimately matters. God loves you unconditionally. He approves of you and accepts you. All you need to do is to come to Him with an open heart and let His unchanging love heal you. (Take time to minister to your group.)

PRAYER STARTER:

Father God, thank You for loving me completely, no matter what. Please heal me from the pain of others' rejection, and help me receive and remember Your love in every moment. In Jesus' name, Amen.