



Legacy Academics (FB)
Finding Life Purpose in Connecting
ACCEPTANCE

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Legacy Academics

How am I connecting and showing Acceptance?-Biblical Perspective



I. Introduction: How does God Meet Our need for Acceptance?

During His earthly ministry, Jesus accepted people regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, social standing, or previous moral failures, as illustrated by His encounters with the Samaritan woman (John 4:4-26), the Gentile centurion (Luke 7:1-10), the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11), and the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43), among others. He loved unconditionally, forgave freely, and gently restored broken people to spiritual health. Most significantly, Jesus addressed humanity's abiding need for Acceptance in that "while we were still sinners," He died for us (Romans 5:8).

II. Engage in Community—*You Can't Grow Yourself By Yourself: Doing life with others helps free us to grow.*

Hebrews 10:25 *"...not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."*



Spirit Empowered Faith Outcomes:

P2. "Startling people" with loving initiatives to "give first"

"Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return" (Lk. 6:38). "But Jesus was saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'" (Lk. 23:34). See also Lk. 23:43 and Jn. 19:27.

P3. Discerning the relational needs of others with a heart to give of His love

"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear" (Eph. 4:29). "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). See also Lk. 6:30.

Key Bible Passages

Luke 19:1–10—Zacchaeus—The Zacchaeus Principle

Christ ministered to many individuals across the pages of Scripture. He was particularly sensitive to peoples' **pain**—physical, emotional, and spiritual. He was, to them, the Great Physician. He met people at their point of **need**—physically, spiritually, and relationally. He was to them the Great Provider. Christ accepted and ministered to sinners while not condoning their wrong behavior. Christ demonstrated unconditional love as He viewed a person's **worth** as separate from their **behavior**. *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us [declaring our worth], in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

Jesus is a perfect model and example of how to minister to an individual's need. Let's consider His strategy with a tax-collector named Zacchaeus and a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. (Read Luke 19:1-10 and John 4:7-26) In his interaction with these two individuals, He modeled for us the attitude and action we should have and take with our own children.

First, let's consider a first-century tax collector named Zacchaeus:

His Behavior—likely included stealing, deceit, lying

His Feelings—possibly lonely, rejected, guilty, fearful, insecure

His Thoughts—possibly "no one cares"; "nothing will ever change"

His Needs—he probably needed Acceptance, security, approval, respect, attention

How did Christ minister to him? *“Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house”* (Luke 19:5) Christ did not attack his behavior—*“Zacchaeus get down from there, you lying, cheating thief!”*—even though Christ knew all about Zacchaeus and his wrong behavior. Instead, He ministered to his needs for acceptance, attention, security, approval, and respect. Jesus initiated fellowship with this unpopular man and Zacchaeus experienced positive feelings and thoughts which led to changed behavior:

“So he came down at once and welcomed Him gladly,” (Luke 19:6).

“Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount,” (Luke 19:8).

Discussion Questions

1. Read the passage from Luke 19 about Zacchaeus the tax collector. Why do the crowds describe Zacchaeus as a “sinner?” What were his unmet relational needs? How did Jesus respond to him?
2. How does Jesus’ response to Zacchaeus serve as a model for us as we seek to respond in love to those who are behaving in negative or sinful ways?
3. After this encounter with Jesus, how might Zacchaeus’ thoughts, feelings, and behavior have changed? In Zacchaeus’ case, you may wish to examine the scriptural evidence regarding the changes that took place in his life.
4. How is your own behavior positively affected when your relational need for Acceptance is met?
5. How can we become more sensitive to people’s verbal and non-verbal expressions of their unmet needs? How can we resist the temptation to simply condemn others’ bad behavior without addressing their need for Acceptance?
6. Reflect on what Jesus *said* or *did not say* that helped meet the need of Acceptance.
7. Reflect on what Jesus *did* or *did not do* that helped meet the need of Acceptance.

Prayers to “become:”

Privately, with a partner, or in a small group—

- Thank God that He accepts you even though you often fail. Thank Him for those who have looked beyond your faults in order to meet your needs.
- With a prayer partner, ask God to birth Acceptance and love for others in your heart, and to reduce your tendency to be overly judgmental or critical of others’ sinful behavior.
- Talk with God about those whose behavior you find difficult to accept. Ask Him to reveal unmet needs in the lives of these individuals that you can respond to with love and compassion.

III. Encounter Gratitude—*Gratefulness empowers our motivation to grow:*



Spirit Empowered Faith Outcomes:

L3. Experiencing God as He really is through deepened intimacy with Him

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:4,5). *“Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore He will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice”* (Is. 30:18). See also John 14:9.

W1. Frequently being led by the Spirit into deeper love for the One who wrote the Word

“Love the Lord thy God—love thy neighbor; upon these two commandments deepens all the law and prophets” (Mt. 22:37-40). *“I delight in Your commands because I love them.”* (Ps. 119:47). *“The ordinances of the Lord are pure—they are more precious than gold—sweeter than honey”* (Ps. 19:9-10).

Now put yourself in the Zacchaeus story. Imagine now that you're the one who has encountered Jesus. He stops along the road of life to speak to you. You might not have stolen money from your neighbors or embezzled money like Zacchaeus. But consider this: Have there been any times when you might have robbed others of respect, kindness or Acceptance? Have there been times when you've cheated your spouse, family or friends out of time, been stingy with Appreciation or encouragement? Have there been any occasions when you might have selfishly taken from others—tried to take affection or demand what's due?

You at times have hurt others, been untruthful or unfair. Pause quietly and receive the Acceptance of Jesus. Imagine Jesus says to you, *"Come, I want to spend time with you."*

Allow your heart to experience gratitude for the Acceptance of Jesus—and privately tell Him: "I am especially grateful that you _____." "Thank you Jesus for continuing to Accept and love me—even when I mess up."

IV. Experience "Becoming"—*Daily living out of relational principles develops our adequacy to grow:*



Spirit Empowered Faith Outcomes:

M1. Imparting the gospel and one's very life in daily activities and relationships, vocation and community

"Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us" (1 Thess. 2:8-9). See also Eph. 6:19.

How Might God Use Us to Meet Others' Need for Acceptance?

Answer: Experience Romans 15:7 as a lifestyle.

Romans 15:7 *"Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."*

- Look beyond people's faults. The closer we get to others, the more we notice their imperfections. Acceptance requires that we look past these flaws and focus instead on meeting their needs.
- Quickly forgive others when they commit offenses against you. Unforgiveness short-circuits Acceptance.
- Love people as God loves you. God's love for each of us is unmerited (we do not deserve it and cannot earn it), unconditional (it is not based on what we do or fail to do), and unlimited (it will never run out or fail to reach us). We should strive to Accept and love others in the same way.
- Make a special effort to help others feel accepted when they experience failure or disappointment, as people's relational need for Acceptance is greatly accentuated during such times.
- Demonstrate genuine Acceptance of those who are of a different race, nationality, or socio-economic group from your own. Strive to talk with them, welcome them, include them, and invite them to join you in various activities. Our membership in the body of Christ compels us to receive one another willingly and unconditionally because of our unity in Him: "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26–28).
- Be especially sensitive to others' need for Acceptance when they enter into a new environment. When people move to a different city, job, school, or church, they have an acute need to be accepted and actively received into the new group. Offer them words of welcome, introduce them to others, and invite them to your home or to a restaurant for a meal.

V. Sharing the Good News

**Spirit Empowered Faith Outcomes:**

M8. Attentive listening to others' story, vulnerably sharing of our story, and a sensitive witness of Jesus' story as life's ultimate hope; developing your story of prodigal, pre-occupied and pain-filled living; listening for other's story and sharing Jesus' story
 "...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet. 3:15). "...because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again" (Luke 11:24). (Mark 5:21-42). (Jn. 9:1-35).

Given that we are to impart not only the gospel but our very life (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8), often times our best witness is to:

- Impart life to others through sharing a specific needed dimension of His grace (i.e.: meeting a relational need for Acceptance, attention, encouragement, approval)
- Allowing the Holy Spirit to prompt in the recipient of this grace, the Pentecost response "what is this?" "they were amazed and marveled..." (See Acts 2: 7-16)
- To which we are ready to give an account of the hope we have within us - (1 Peter 3:15) by bridging the conversations back to Jesus...who is our HOPE!

Listen for Others' Story

Listen to these sentences that people may say if they need Acceptance:

"I feel out of place. I don't seem to fit in."

"I think I blew it. I am going to be in trouble."

Share Your Story

Complete the following sentences:

I remember missing Acceptance when _____.

I remember receiving Acceptance when _____.

Re-Tell the Jesus Story

Finish this story:

"That reminds me of the time when Jesus encountered Zacchaeus..."