

Gathering Question: What do you think is the most difficult thing for your friends and loved ones to accept about you? Why?

Accept One Another

“Accept one another.” What a difficult concept – especially in the light of our diversity. As you know this statement if made by Paul in his letter to the church at Rome in the middle of a discussion about disputable matters and Paul’s prohibition against Christians judging each other (15:7). Paul made it clear that things like eating preferences or the way in which we view days as special or all alike are **all** disputable matters and that we should not pass judgment on each other on the basis of our beliefs on those issues.

Instead of judgment, Christians are not to place obstacles in the way of brothers or sisters who are trying to live for Jesus. In fact, if we know that our brother or sister have deep struggles with some matter that is not central to the faith, we are not to run rough shod over them because we are a bit more mature in that area of the faith. If the exercise of some freedom distresses our brother or sister, we must be very careful not to exercise our freedoms in such a way that it will destroy the faith of others. Paul states the goal clearly in Romans 14:19 – “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification.” We should never destroy God’s work for the sake of our enlightened understanding of something. It is better to sacrifice our rights for our brethren than to destroy our brethren by the practice of our freedom.

Paul encourages the strong to bear the failings of the weak. He encourages us not to try to please ourselves but to please others. He encourages us to be like Christ – with all his compassion, longsuffering, and endurance in his relationships with others.

He calls us to accept one another, “just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” All the sin and harshness of this fallen world has resulted in all kinds of selfish behavior and non-accepting attitudes. Paul’s call is to reverse the fall! He wants us to learn to be accepting and not rejecting. And the reason? So that God can be praised.

Read: Romans 14:14-15:7

Discuss:

1. Surely there are some things that are unacceptable in church relationships? What is on your list? Do you have Scripture to back you up?
2. What does it mean “to accept?” What difference does it make that Paul said, “like Christ has accepted you?”
3. How is God praised when we have healthy, redemptive relationships with each other?