

Week 5

Differences

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

Romans 15:7

Can you remember a time when you weren't picked for something: for a part in the school play; for a spot on a team; for acceptance into a certain club; for a job? Not being picked for something can be disappointing and painful and can make us feel like we're not accepted. Unfortunately, that is something that everybody feels and experiences at some time in their life.

Romans 15:7 doesn't promise us that we'll always make the team or that everything will always work out for us. But it does give us hope, because it reminds us that Jesus accepts into His family anyone who believes in what Jesus has done for them on the cross and who receives Him into their lives (John 1:12; Acts 16:31). And if you've made the decision to follow Jesus, you too have been accepted into His forever family!

Did you know that Jesus loved everyone when He was on the earth? He even accepted people whom others rejected. For example, the Bible tells us that Jesus was a *“friend of sinners”* (Matthew 11:19). He was also kind to children, to the poor, to tax collectors, to the blind and the lame, and to people with various diseases. In other words, He accepted, greeted, and spent time with people who were quite different from Him.

Because God does not limit His love to only certain groups or types of people, it is wrong anytime we reject other people because of the color of their skin, or how they dress, or where they are from, or because they're different from us in some way. God has made everyone in His image, and because of that, everyone has great value. That means that we can and should love and accept others, even if we don't like what they do, even if they have different beliefs than we do, and even if they reject us. We are to accept others, because God has accepted us.

And why should we do this? Because, as this week's verse teaches us, it makes God happy whenever we accept others as God accepts us.

Do

- Write on a sheet of paper all of the various things that make each member of your family unique and different from one another. Celebrate these differences together and discuss how each of these differences can benefit your family. Brainstorm additional ideas of what makes your family different from other families.
- Take a nature walk as a family. Point out differences between similar objects (e.g., rocks, trees, leaves, insects, etc.). If your family is large enough, you could also split into different groups and take photos of what you discover and then share them when you reconvene with the others.

Discuss

- Share about a time when it felt really good to be accepted by others. Then share about a time when you weren't accepted. What did the experience of not being accepted feel like?
- How accepting of others would people say that you are of those who are different from you? On what would they base their opinion?
- Name some individuals or groups of people who might not normally feel welcome at church because they are "different" from everybody else. What are some practical ways that your family can demonstrate Christ-like kindness and acceptance to these individuals?