

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
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“Wherefore, receive ye one another...”

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Romans 15:7 “Wherefore, receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.” (King James Version)

GOAL: To develop and understand how important it is to reach out receive, and accept others as God has accepted us.

ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS/QUESTIONS:

1. How does receiving one another bring glory to God?
2. Have you noticed that believers who have grown in their relationship with the Lord seem to demonstrate a natural acceptance in receiving others?
3. How many new members have you taken time to share experiences and offer support?

LESSON INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

Time: About 57 A. D. Place: Corinth

Paul and the apostles had not been to Rome when Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Rome. It is thought that the Jews who were at Pentecost had returned to Rome to spread the gospel. As the Church grew, Gentiles and Jews are now brothers and sisters in Christ.

Rome had diverse cultures and religious backgrounds among the local congregation. Some of the Jews could trace their heritage back fifty generations, but they never really fit in with the other Roman citizens. Under different circumstances these groups of people would have been political enemies. There would have been economical and financial conflicts. Now, that they were a part of the same congregation in Rome, this was going to be a challenge for them all. Acceptance had never been necessary. Now that God had made salvation available to everyone, these Gentiles were now in the family of God. They all had the same privileges in Christ.

Paul stresses in Romans 15:7, acceptance and unity between the Gentiles and Jews. Basically, Paul tells them to embrace and accept one another just as God accepted them. Doing this would surely glorify God. The Christian Romans had many differences but now they were brought together as one in Christ, unified. What an awesome opportunity to glorify God. ¹

¹ <http://www.fpcjackson.org>

LESSON CONTENT

A Divine Blueprint for Receiving One Another.

Christ is the Christian's model of acceptance, especially given that He received us in our ungodly sinful state. This acceptance was not exclusive to the Jews. He received both Jews and Gentiles. We were dead in our sins and transgressions walking according to the course of this world. (Ephesians 2:1) Because we were enemies with God, He had every right to reject and leave us in our depraved, fallen state (Romans 5:10). Yet, He decided to receive us unto Himself because of His incredible love. This acceptance by a Holy God is what happens when we, by faith, receive the gift of salvation Christ offers by dying on the cross. Therefore, Peter lets us know that now, as believers, we are, remarkably, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and a peculiar people so we should show forth the praise of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light! [I Peter 2:9]

God continued to extend His grace or unmerited blessings upon us. Having escaped corruption, God gave us exceedingly great and precious promises and made us partakers of His own divine nature! [II Peter 1:4] Since He imputed His own righteousness to us, we can now be received into His kingdom. [II Corinthians 5:21] [Romans 5:18] *He made us fit for kingdom living! Hallelujah!* Jesus received us so that we might bring glory and praise to God. With this unbelievable divine gift and example of love and acceptance, should we do any less for others who come to our church? If we realize that God loved us when we were unlovable, our attitude and actions should reflect that same love.

“But God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” [Romans 5:8]

Receive One Another:

In the same manner as Christ has received us, so should we receive each other. When a young man brings his fiancé before the family, his hope is that they will receive her. He prays that she will not come under criticism, disapproval, or judgment. Above all, he hopes that there will be no rejection. God's desire is that we receive and accept one another with high regard. As a result of what Christ did, God received us into His divine family. *For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”* God did not stop there! One might ask; how much better can it get? God's acceptance of us was so great that He made us heirs, even joint-heirs with Christ!! [Gal. 4:7] [Romans 8:7] ***Christ literally changed our status, our future, and our destination!!!*** We have been made heirs to an incorruptible inheritance that will not fade away, but it is reserved in heaven for us. This should make your heart overflow with joy! [I Peter 1:4]

The world has conditioned us to be very guarded. God wants to raise our consciousness. Jesus said if you love those who love you, even the heathen does that. [Luke 6:32] How do we demonstrate through our actions and attitude that we are children of God? The world is harsh and judgmental of people who differ: in ethnicity, religion, social, and economic status, and achievement. Should the household of faith demonstrate the same behavior as

the unsaved? More importantly, how readily do you go out of your way to accept a new member into our spiritual family and even others within our congregation who are different?

One characteristic of a healthy family is that its members continually connect with each other. Here are some ways. During and after church services, look for an opportunity to branch out to greet others. Acquaint yourself with someone that does not know you. Invite them to a Sunday School Class, bible study class, prayer meeting, a deacon's group, or other ministries that might be of interest to them. Cordially receive them as Christ received us. How warmly do you accept those that you would not ordinarily reach out to? How patient are you with those who are "babes" in Christ? Paul exhorted us to receive those who are weak in faith Rom 14:1. The amplified version reads: *As for the man who is a weak believer, welcome him [into your fellowship], but not to criticize his opinions or pass judgment on his scruples or perplex him with discussions.* How we receive our brothers and sisters is important to God and glorifies Him for all that He has done for us. It becomes an expression of our gratitude to God and our love for Him. Moreover, as we receive, accept, and welcome others consistently with patience and grace, it can reflect our spiritual growth, maturity, and commitment to the Word of God.

SUMMARY/REVIEW/CLOSURE:

The world has established its own criteria for acceptance. The world qualifies or disqualifies people using earthly standards. Income, academic accomplishments, religious affiliation, ethnicity, and social standing are used to determine the level of acceptance given to others. But God uses divine criteria for acceptance. What's unusual about God's way is that He himself takes the time to transform us personally so that we can be accepted into His kingdom. He made us in His image and likeness. He gave Christ, His only Son, to put us in right standing so we that we can be received. All of this begins with us receiving Christ as our Lord and Savior. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name; Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. [John 1: 12-13].* As we grow in faith, we develop the attributes of our heavenly Father. It is God's Holy Spirit who helps the body of Christ mature enough to demonstrate that same love and acceptance of others.

If we believe that God would go to such lengths to receive us unto Himself, how does the church collectively demonstrate that same love? Every person, regardless of physical, economic, or social differences who crosses the threshold of a church door should sense a spirit of love and acceptance. The assembled body of Christ ought to have a sweet spirit that is a direct contrast of a broken world. Unity, love, and peace should prevail. We all know what it feels like to be in new place and in a new and unfamiliar environment with people we don't know or who don't believe as we do or look like us. We struggle with the awkward feeling of not belonging. No one likes feeling the alienation that comes with being a stranger. We have often admired people who have the ability to reach out and make people feel comfortable. Research has revealed that new church members will seek another place of worship if they do not connect in a meaningful way with at least seven people

within a few months at a new church. What a unique opportunity for God's people to distinguish themselves from the world. Each church member has a *family* responsibility to welcome and accept visitors and new members. A family that has the love of God dwelling in them always has in room their hearts for love of more people. Jesus tells us that our love for others will be our proof that we truly are His disciples. (John 13:35) In each church, every member ought to demonstrate a relationship with the Lord that enables him or her to be a witness of and follower of Christ. As the song says:

*We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord.
We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord.
And we pray that all unity will one day be restored.
And they'll know we are Christians by our love,
By our love! Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love!*

DISCUSSION/APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Is promoting God's love and unity within our congregation one of your primary agendas as a church member?
2. Do you intentionally reach out to embrace people who are not usually a part of your circle of friends?
3. Does it get you excited to be with people with whom your only connection is Jesus and Gospel?

APPLICATION/GUIDED PRACTICE/JOURNALING EXERCISE:

To chart your progress, begin to journal, the name of each new person to whom you reached out, how you shared with them, and ways to promote fellowship, their spiritual growth, and connectivity to the body of Christ. List ways to communicate, get acquainted with them, and invite them to attend church functions.