ACCEPTANCE

Core Value #3: ACCEPTANCE

Our journeys are deepened through the loving and supportive relationships we form with one another. Knowing that we belong, questions about faith can be lived into safely, passionately, and in the trusted company of fellow believers. We don't expect people to be perfect – Connection is a church for people who don't have it all together. We are a church for people who want to grow. We are a church for people who are hurting and are willing to admit it. Connection is a church for real people who face real problems. We don't expect unbelievers to act like believers until they are. We offer acceptance of people without being judgmental of them. (Romans 15:7; Luke 6:42; Romans 14:1-4; Matthew 10:40)

Living a Life of Acceptance as a Christian - A Biblical Vision for the Modern Church

Christian acceptance can be understood through four movements:

1. Acceptance grounded in Christ's welcome
2. Acceptance shaped by humility instead of judgment
3. Acceptance practiced amid differences and conscience
4. Acceptance expressed through hospitality and shared identity

The early Church provides the lived example of these truths.

1. Acceptance Begins with Christ's Welcome

Romans 15:7 — The Foundation

> *"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."*

Paul makes acceptance theological before it becomes relational.

What This Means Biblically

Christ accepted believers:

- While they were sinners (Romans 5:8)
- Before moral perfection
- Across ethnic, cultural, and social boundaries

Christian acceptance therefore is **grace received and then extended**.

Acceptance is not based on:

- Agreement
- Similar background
- Spiritual maturity level

It is based on shared belonging in Christ.

Early Church Example

The early Church faced enormous divisions:

- Jew and Gentile
- Slave and free
- Male and female
- Rich and poor

Yet communities gathered at one table. This was socially revolutionary in the Roman world. Acceptance itself became a testimony to the gospel.

Modern Church Application

Living acceptance today means:

- Welcoming people before they "fit church culture"
- Making space for spiritual growth rather than demanding instant conformity
- Seeing fellow believers primarily as people Christ has received

We accept others because Christ accepted us first.

2. Acceptance Requires Humility Instead of Judgment

Luke 6:42 — Removing the Plank

"First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly…"

Jesus confronts hypocrisy — the tendency to evaluate others more harshly than ourselves.

Biblical Insight

This passage does not forbid discernment; it forbids **self-righteous judgment**.
Acceptance grows from:

- Self-awareness
- Repentance
- Recognition of personal need for grace

Early Church Practice

Early Christians practiced confession and accountability within community. Leaders repeatedly warned against pride and factionalism.

Humility allowed diverse believers to remain unified despite imperfections.

Modern Church Application

Acceptance looks like:

- Listening before correcting
- Extending patience toward spiritual immaturity
- Correcting gently rather than condemning publicly

Humility creates relational safety where transformation can happen.

3. Acceptance Makes Space for Differences in Conscience

Romans 14:1–4 — Welcoming the "Weak in Faith"

"Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters."

Paul addresses disagreements over diet, holy days, and personal convictions.

Key Principle

Not every disagreement is a gospel issue.
Paul distinguishes between:

- **Core truths** (Christ, salvation, holiness)
- **Disputable matters** (personal convictions and practices)

Acceptance means refusing to elevate preferences into tests of belonging.

Early Church Reality
Jewish Christians maintained dietary laws while Gentile believers did not. Instead of forcing uniformity, the apostles encouraged mutual respect. Unity was preserved without erasing differences.

Modern Church Application
Acceptance today includes:

- Respecting different worship styles or traditions
- Allowing varied convictions on secondary issues
- Avoiding spiritual superiority

Examples:

- Parenting approaches
- Political perspectives
- Cultural expressions of faith
- Non-essential theological differences

Acceptance protects unity where Scripture allows freedom.

4. Acceptance Is Expressed Through Hospitality and Representation

Matthew 10:40 — Receiving Others as Receiving Christ
"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me."

Jesus connects receiving believers with receiving Himself. Acceptance therefore becomes **sacramental** — how we treat others reflects how we treat Christ.

Early Church Practice
Hospitality was central:

- Traveling Christians depended on host homes.
- House churches welcomed strangers into family life.
- Shared meals reinforced belonging.

To welcome a believer was to honor Christ's presence among them.

Modern Church Application
Acceptance today is practiced through:

- Intentional hospitality
- Inclusion in community life
- Making newcomers visible and valued
- Creating spaces where people are known, not anonymous

Acceptance is not abstract; it is relational and embodied.

5. The Early Church as a Living Model of Acceptance

The early Christian movement survived because it practiced radical acceptance rooted in Christ:

Ethnic Acceptance
Gentiles welcomed without becoming culturally Jewish (Acts 15).

Social Acceptance
Slaves and masters worshiped together — unheard of in Roman society.

Spiritual Acceptance
New believers were discipled patiently rather than excluded for immaturity.

Moral Transformation With Belonging
People belonged before they were fully formed, yet were lovingly shaped toward holiness.

The Church held together **truth and welcome**.

6. What Acceptance Looks Like Practically in the Modern Church

Personal Posture
- Assume grace before suspicion
- Extend patience in spiritual growth
- Remember your own ongoing need for mercy

Within Church Relationships
- Refuse gossip and labeling
- Welcome honest questions and struggles
- Maintain unity amid disagreement

In Church Culture
- Move from “fitting in” to “belonging”
- Value people over preferences
- Practice restorative rather than exclusionary responses

Acceptance vs. Cultural Definitions

Biblical Acceptance	Cultural Acceptance
Rooted in Christ’s grace	Rooted in personal autonomy
Welcomes while transforming	Often avoids transformation
Holds truth and love together	Often separates love from truth
Aims at unity in Christ	Aims at individual validation

Christian acceptance says:
“You are genuinely welcomed because Christ welcomes you — and together we grow toward Christlikeness.”

A Simple Biblical Definition

Christian acceptance is the Christ-shaped practice of welcoming others with humility, grace, and hospitality, honoring their belonging in God’s family while walking together toward spiritual maturity.