

# **Sermon: God's Accepting Family**

**Text: Romans 15:7**

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**Introduction:** Everyone wants to be accepted and feel like they belong. What would you do to fit in to be a part of “the group”? There is nothing wrong with wanting to be accepted or even popular as long as it does not turn into a game of winners and losers. Some people will do almost anything to be in the “in” group.

**It is bad when friends or peers become stepping stones, when people get used.**

**It is wrong when the “right” gets sacrificed for what’s cool (this week). When you compromise to fit in, you need to step back and look at what you are really giving up.**

**It is wrong when others get pushed out to make room for you. A close group of friends doesn’t have to be a closed group.**

**You should always be able to “be yourself” with friends. Real friends accept you just the way you are. So does God!**

**The Church should be a safe and accepting place for everyone. It should be an inclusive community for those who are trying to please God.**

**The Head of the church knew what it meant to be unwelcome. [John 1:11 \(NIV\)](#)  
<sup>11</sup>He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.**

**God knows what it feels like to be rejected. He does not want his creation to have those same feelings of alienation. That must be a big part of the reason for establishing the church.**

**God’s Word and its authority in our lives must be accepted.**

**Discipline must be accepted if we are to grow in our faith.**

**“God loves us the way we are, but he loves us too much to leave us that way.”  
- Leighton Ford**

**We need to accept people who are:**

**I. Weak (spiritually weaker)**

**How should the more mature relate to those who are spiritually weaker? Certainly not with condescension? Looking down on someone else rarely helps improve them.**

**“Away with those who want an entirely pure church! That is plainly the same thing as wanting no church at all.”** - Martin Luther

**You will never find a perfect church from a human perspective.**

**It is natural for us to help ourselves, but not others. In fact we say: “God helps those who help themselves.” But if we are to be like Christ, we must bear the problems and weaknesses of others until their faith is stronger. We must help carry one another’s burdens ([Galatians 6:2](#)).**

**[Galatians 6:1-5 \(NIV\)](#) <sup>1</sup>Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup>Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, <sup>5</sup>for each one should carry his own load.**

**Illus.** All of us were babies once. It took time to learn how to crawl, stand, and walk. (In fact developmentally this is very important; it’s called patterning.) It also took time to adjust to solid food.

**A healthy family will do whatever is best for the other member - even if that would mean sacrifice, and that I would not get everything I wanted. The function of family is to build up and encourage using the gifts God has given us.**

**Christ is always the model for bearing with the failings of the weak.**

**[Romans 15:1 \(NIV\)](#) <sup>1</sup>We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.**

**This word that is used to describe “bearing with the failings of the weak” is the same word used of Jesus as he bore ([βασταζειν](#)) the cross.**

**William Barclay reminds us that the Christian family should be known for its toleration. “It is not the toleration which tolerates because it is too lazy to do anything else. It is the toleration which knows that a man may be won much more easily to a fuller faith by surrounding him with an atmosphere of love than by attacking him with a battery of criticism.”**

**“Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be”. - Thomas a Kempis**

**We need to accept people who are:**

## **II. Difficult to Love**

**You and I are of course the exception. We are easy to love. Right?**

**Because of racial, social or economic prejudice (see James’ epistle) some seem difficult to love.**

**One of the most segregated hours is corporate worship on Sunday morning. Look at our churches; they look alike. There is not the diversity there needs to be in the Body.**

**Illus.** A few years ago Faith Ministries Baptist Church in Midland, MI moved into their new facility. I was excited for them. I knew how they felt, but it is sad we have to have “black churches” and “white churches”.

**Some churches in different towns are thought of as the “money” churches, the culturally-elite churches. It is where we might expect to see the wealthy and social high-class or the upwardly mobile. The poor might be uncomfortable there. Many times though the problem of prejudice exists just as much in the minds of the poor or the minority than in those thought to have “an attitude”. Our love of Jesus ought to be enough to keep us together rather than separate us.**

**Everyone should be welcome here. Some churches dress down not so much to accommodate those who do not maybe have good clothes, but because they want to be comfortable. And they want everyone to feel welcome and accepted there.**

**If you are a graduate from a seminary or did not finish High School, I want you to know you are welcome here. If you make \$7,000 or \$700,000, you may sit anywhere you want. But of course, it goes without saying that the best seats are UP FRONT! Black or white or any other color of skinned-person is always welcome in God’s house of worship. All of us are the same in God’s eyes. We are all trying to go to heaven by being faithful to the grace that has been extended to ALL OF US.**

**Jesus breaks down all barriers. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave or free, male or female because we are all one in Christ Jesus. The only barrier between God and mankind is SIN and Jesus Christ has done away with the penalty for sin once for all by dying on the cross for us.**

**Mankind does not need to die while still in sin. Jesus Christ has forever bridged the gap and created a NEW FAMILY for those who will put their faith in Him.**

**We need to accept people who are:**

### **III. Just Like Us – Sinners**

**The model is Christ. How does he accept us? Right where we are is where He meets us! While we were still sinners Christ died for us (the ungodly). He was God's perfect SERVANT.**

**Romans 5:6-8 (NIV)** <sup>6</sup>You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**I do not deserve God's favor any more or less than you. He has called us all to accept others on the same basis as He accepted us - totally and completely and without merit.**

**When Jesus came to earth, He was rejected because of His righteousness by the religious community. They felt threatened by His consistent love and unconventional style.**

**We are different. We are sinners through and through. We do not even always treat well those we love let alone those we have learned to dislike. The Holy Spirit is the only thing that marks us as different. It is only with God's help we can love and be patient and kind with one another.**

**Conclusion:** Acceptance provides for unity and makes it possible for us to praise God. It also helps us give a positive example of family to the community.

**II Corinthians 6:17-18 (NIV)** [quoting Isaiah] <sup>17</sup>“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” <sup>18</sup>“I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

**The church is not some mystical family, but a very real tangible group. Family takes place openly for the whole world to see. Listen to the prophet Ezekiel: **Ezekiel 20:41 (NIV)** <sup>41</sup>I will accept you as fragrant incense when I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will show myself holy among you in the sight of the nations.**

**Grace is required to be a part of God's family, and the acceptance of grace is sometimes very difficult, but it is necessary nonetheless.**

**In "The Whisper Test," Mary Ann Bird writes: I grew up knowing I was different and I hated it. I was born with a cleft palate, and when I started school, my classmates made it clear to me how I looked to others: a little girl with a misshapen lip, crooked nose, lopsided teeth, and garbled speech.**

**When schoolmates asked, "What happened to your lip?" I'd tell them I'd fallen and cut it on a piece of glass. Somehow it seemed more acceptable to have suffered an accident than to have been born different. I was convinced that no one outside my family could love me.**

**There was, however, a teacher in the second grade whom we all adored — Mrs. Leonard by name. She was short, round, happy—a sparkling lady.**

**Annually we had a hearing test. ...Mrs. Leonard gave the test to everyone in the class, and finally it was my turn. I knew from past years that as we stood against the door and covered one ear, the teacher sitting at her desk would whisper something, and we would repeat it back—things like "The sky is blue" or "Do you have new shoes?" I waited there for those words that God must have put in her mouth, those seven words that changed my life. Mrs. Leonard said, in her whisper, "I wish you were my little girl."**

**God says to every person deformed by sin, "I wish you were my child."**

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**Romans 15 ends with a benediction - a word of blessing. Again, may I offer you the same well wishes?**

**[Romans 15:13 \(NIV\)](#) <sup>13</sup>May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**