



Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

Lookin' for a Leader Series, Lesson 15

Lesson Title: Accepting Others

Take Home Point: God accepts us because of Jesus; we can accept others.

Warm-Up:

In his excellent book, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*, author Phillip Yancey describes a family of four generations that lived in a state of sustained "ungrace." The oldest was the daughter of an alcoholic father. He was abusive and hateful. She was determined never to be like him, and indeed, she never touched alcohol. But her heart was so hard toward her father that she could not love her children; they grew up knowing only unforgiveness and broken relationships. Those children left their mother as soon as possible with no intent to see her again, but her influence remained. Because that generation refused to be restored in relationship to their mother, their children also were raised in anger and bitterness, leaving an indelible mark on relationships as they made their way through life.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:17–21

Observation (What happened?):

How has God restored our relationship with him? Who is restored?

What is our message to those who don't know Jesus?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

Describe our new way of living as believers in Christ Jesus. How do we demonstrate that way in everyday life?

What keeps us from a restored relationship with God? (Be specific.)

Insight:

1 John 4:20–21 says, *"If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."* (NIV) God accepts us *just as we are*. He does not expect us to fix ourselves up, to reach some level of "goodness," before he accepts us. In Jesus, we are fully restored to him in relationship. He does not accept our sin—but *"while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8 NIV) And just as he extends his grace to us when our relationship with him is broken, God wants us to do the same for those around us. We don't have it in ourselves to do this, but God gives it to us to give to others. We become the channels of his grace to an "ungraceful" world.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

Name one way you are telling someone else the message of reconciliation with God.

Think of someone whom you have a hard time loving and accepting. Pray for a forgiving and patient heart towards that person.

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