



## Does God Accept Us As We Are?

**Matthew 11:28: (NASB) *Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.***



Have you noticed how easy it is to offend people these days? There seems to be such an overt need to accept and to be accepted that we go overboard with the "correctness" of our words and behavior lest we hurt anyone's feelings at any time. Now, being accepting of others is a good thing, but is it the most important thing? Should we willingly lay all other principles and standards upon the altar of mutual acceptance? Are we compelled to accept the world the way it is without regard to the good we have gleaned from the way it was? How did Jesus do it? He certainly spent time with the sinners of his day but was it at the cost of higher principles? Did Jesus

actually "hang out" with sinners? Was his time with them to make them feel good or accepted? What is God's role in all of this? If we want a relationship with God, does He accept us as we are or is there more to it?



**Let's begin by looking into the context of our theme Scripture as it presents such an inviting relief for our lives:**

**Matthew 11:25: (NASB) <sup>25</sup>*At that time Jesus said, I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.***

What *hidden things*? Let's look a few texts back.

**Jesus had just exposed the pride of three cities of his time - Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum:**

**Matthew 11:20: (NASB) *Then he began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles were done, because they did not repent.***

These cities rejected him, even though he showed them great works of God.

Jesus put his own ministry into its proper context based on history and the prophets. He compared these three cities to three cities in the past - Tyre, Sidon and Sodom. He said that had those same miracles been done in those old cities, they would have repented and been in existence to Jesus' day. That is how serious their rejection of him was.

**Matthew 11:26-30: (NASB) <sup>26</sup>*Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.* <sup>27</sup>*All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.***

*For this way was well-pleasing in Your sight* - Jesus acquiesced to the will of God. He could have thought, "Maybe I should have done more miracles," or "Maybe I should have approached it in a different way." But his response was *this way was well-pleasing in Your sight*. Jesus accepted God's way.



*Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight* was the favorite Scripture of my Uncle Steve, who died 17 years ago. He played a major role in me growing up as a Christian. His attitude and scriptural knowledge were astounding. He was a man who never got mad. I never heard him raise his voice. His wife and children verified that after his death. His attitude was, "It is well-pleasing in God's sight so I can manage it."

**Jesus continues by saying that he was the sole conduit of God's grace for their generation and beyond:**

*<sup>28</sup>Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

These are probably some of the most-quoted verses in the New Testament.

*Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden* - Jesus set the groundwork for this in the previous points - Even though he just pronounced judgment on the cities, he still offers consolation to *individuals*, offering rest.

If you want rest from the weariness of the burdens of life, come to Jesus. To be yoked with Jesus is to be joined with him in his work.

To plow the fields, two cattle were yoked together to pull the plow as a team. The Old Testament warned against yoking two different kinds of animals together. The New Testament speaks of how we should be *equally yoked* with our spouse.



We are to be bound together, yoked, with Jesus. Both the yoke and the work to be done become bearable and will bring rest. We are at the same time working and at rest (having internal peace).



When the Lord called me, I couldn't believe he would accept me in the shape I was in. I was miserable, worldly and fallen in so many ways. I was humble enough to know he was calling me, leading me and guiding me, which is mind-boggling. By His grace I am growing, developing and changing.

From where did Jesus get the phrase *rest for your souls*?

**Jesus quoted an Old Testament prophecy to verify that he spoke of God's will and way:**

Jeremiah 6:10,13-16: (NASB) <sup>10</sup>...Behold, their ears are closed and they cannot listen. Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reproach to them; They have no delight in it... <sup>13</sup>For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for gain, and from the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely.



Who was being described so harshly? *From the prophet to the priest* - There was great condemnation coming down against the spiritual leadership of Israel at the time. They were petty, egotistical, self-centered and were not following God’s ways. Did God accept them as they were?

<sup>14</sup>They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially saying, Peace, peace, but there is no peace. <sup>15</sup>Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; they did not even know how to blush...

This gives further description of something gone very wrong in the sight of God. He was unhappy with the prophets and spiritual leaders of Israel at that time. So, how do you find *rest for your souls*?

<sup>16</sup>Thus says the LORD, stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls.

Do not get involved in following that which is so far off track. Do not go down that road even though those who are on the road are seemingly the ones guiding you, teaching you and showing you the way.

You find rest for your souls when you *seek the ancient paths, the good way*. Jesus told us he was the path (John 14:6). He represents what God originally put in place to find acceptability to God.



**Jesus told Israel to go to him for rest instead of their leaders. How does that translate for us now?**

It is important for us to understand that Jesus’ audience was Israel and that their leadership had led them down a compromised path of spiritual lethargy. In our time of global awareness here and now, we must realize that what was once spiritual lethargy is now spiritual cyanide; it is toxic.

How do we become acceptable to God through Jesus?



**“Jesus Loves Me,” (Verse one) Listener Kids**

Jesus loves me! This I know,  
For the Bible tells me so;  
Little ones to him belong,  
They are weak but he is strong.



How do we find the balanced truth between acceptance and change?

**Let's start with love, a resounding comfort to Christians:**

**1 Corinthians 13:4:** (NASB) *Love <26> is patient, love <26> is kind and is not jealous; love <26> does not brag and is not arrogant...*

**Love:** Strongs #26, agape, ag-ah'-pay, love that is affection or benevolence

The giving and receiving of this form of selfless love is a transforming act.

Jesus loves me! Does this mean he accepts me as I am?

**Jesus DOES love you, but to properly answer the acceptance question we also need to ask how much YOU love Jesus?**

**John 14:23-24:** (NASB) <sup>23</sup>*Jesus answered and said to him, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. <sup>24</sup>He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.*

Our selfless love towards Jesus is unequivocally expressed in keeping his words. We next need to get some clarity on his words. We often look at his words of blessing and encouragement and are contented with his care for us. But we need to look further.

We are all fallen and sinful. Only by God's grace could he call us. If we have proof of His care over us, is that it? If we just believe, are we okay now?

Part of the answer is the question, are we following Jesus' words? *If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.* We will talk about what that means as we go forward.

While we are not going to focus on transgenderism, it has risen in our society very quickly and empathically. One of its messages is "accept me as I am." Our language is being redefined. It is not acceptable anymore to use just the pronouns "he" or "she," as some feel they do not fit into either category. This next audio clip discusses the issue:

 **Respect pronouns, Tumblr's Non-binary Special Snowflakes' Cringe Compilation, CringePlanet**

- *Hey everyone! Welcome back! This week I am going to be talking to you about pronouns. Sometimes preferred pronouns or preferred gender pronouns, or PGPs, whatever you call them, pronouns are the things we use to refer to people in the third person that aren't their names. They also are often used as linguistic representation of people's gender identities, so they're important. Really, really, really important. With that in mind, the first and most important rule regarding pronouns is to respect people's pronouns. Always. There should be no questions, there are no exceptions. If someone says, "This is the pronoun I want you to use to refer to me, that is the pronoun you will use to refer to them, period." To do otherwise is offensive, invalidating, humiliating and at best awkward. So, respect people's pronouns.*

So, are we supposed to accept people the way they are?

**The first step toward change is awareness. The second step is acceptance.**

— Nathaniel Branden



**Mark 10:17-27:** (NASB) *<sup>17</sup>As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to him and knelt before him, and asked him, Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

*Eternal (age lasting) life - not heaven. As a Jew, he would have been talking about life on earth. The young man showed humility, respect and sincerity, and so he has Jesus' attention.*

*<sup>18</sup>And Jesus said to him, why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. <sup>19</sup>You know the commandments, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.*

**Jesus' words:** Follow the Law already given to you. Live with honor, integrity and respect.

**Our present day parallel:** Live up to the highest God-driven standards (godly righteousness, godly integrity, godly morality) available, aside from sacrifice.

*<sup>20</sup>And he said to him, Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up. <sup>21</sup>Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, one thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. <sup>22</sup>But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.*

**Jesus knew that while the man was striving to live up to the Law, he would not have been able to keep the Law perfectly, but Jesus saw his sincerity and loved him.**

**Jesus' words:** Now let me raise the standard and show you what it means to be a footstep follower. *You will have treasure in heaven - this was no longer about an earthly life. "Come up higher. Give away what you are attached to and follow me."*

**Did Jesus accept him as he was? No. He loved him as he was but showed him how to be acceptable by raising the bar to an even higher way...divest yourself of all that you hold so dear and follow in Jesus' sacrificial footsteps! This was too much for the man.**

*<sup>23</sup>And Jesus, looking around, said to his disciples, how hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>24</sup>The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. <sup>26</sup>They were even more astonished and said to him, then who can be saved? <sup>27</sup>Looking at them, Jesus said, with people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.*



A historical understanding of the times in which Jesus lived leads to a greater understanding of his sayings. In Old Jerusalem, there was a small gate called the "Needle's Eye," which was part of the much larger gate through which people and animals, such as load carrying camels, entered the great city during the day. At night, the larger gate was closed, but entry could still be gained through the much smaller Needle's Eye. For a camel, loaded with goods and possessions, to make it through this smaller gate, it would have to be unloaded of all that it carried. It would also have to get down on its knees and crawl through the gate. Thus, for a camel to literally go through the Needle's Eye, it would have to cast off all its worldly goods and possessions and adopt the posture of supplication to enter the Holy City. (Wikipedia)



When Jesus offered him something higher, he was too attached. The raising of the standard is not about an impressive resume. Jesus cares about applying our hearts with the discipline to “come up higher.”



Based on all of this, it looks like a Christian’s life is a tough challenge!

**It is all about sacrifice, yet Jesus said mercy and compassion are more important. So, which is it?**

Jesus DID tell us that mercy and compassion are more important than sacrifice. Mercy in what way and what kind of sacrifice was he talking about? It is so easy to get into a war of words about what Jesus said. Let’s simply focus on what he *meant* instead.



“Jesus Loves Me,” (Chorus one) Listener Kids

Yes, Jesus loves me  
Yes, Jesus loves me  
Yes, Jesus loves me  
The Bible tells me so



John 3:16 tells us that *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.* But 1 Peter 1:20 says Jesus was chosen *before the foundation of the world.* God had to accept us as we were because he planned a way of reconciliation with Him while we were sinners. He so loved us when we were all broken and gave us Jesus, so He had to accept us or love us before, right?

Did God accept us as we are/were? More on this soon.



### Back to our basis of love:

1 Corinthians 13:5: (NASB) *...(love) does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered...*

This benevolent kind of love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Does that show God loves us just as we are, since He is that kind of love?

### Safe spaces, Trolling "Safe Space" Social Justice Warriors, Mark Dice

- (Interviewer) *Can you tell us what a safe space is?*
- (College student) *A place where you're not going to get hurt or ridiculed.*
- (Interviewer) *And so on a college campus if there's people with Halloween costumes that maybe make you feel uncomfortable, does that make it not safe anymore?*
- (College student) *Yeah, that's not a safe place.*
- (Interviewer) *So, it's not safe at all just seeing those Halloween costumes?*
- (College student) *Yeah.*
- (Interviewer) *So, if you saw a white person wearing a sombrero, that's not safe?*
- (College student) *No, because that's ridicule. That's being made fun of. It's using that as a caricature.*
- (Interviewer) *You're not joking are you?*
- (College student) *No.*
- (Interviewer) *Oh my gosh. Wow, times have really changed... I can't believe how insensitive people are these days. I mean wearing these costumes and trying to have fun on Halloween? I am not sure where they think they can get that idea.*
- (College student) *No clue.*
- (Interviewer) *You're still not joking are you?*
- (College student) *Still not joking.*

The interpretation is that if you do something I do not like, you are hurting me. Safe spaces are so people can be accepted as they are. But are we in a "safe space" when we stand before God?

### So, what is more important - mercy and compassion or sacrifice?

**Matthew 9:9-13:** (NASB) *<sup>9</sup>As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and he said to him, Follow me! And he got up and followed him. <sup>10</sup>Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and his disciples.*

*And he said to him, Follow me!* - Jesus called a tax collector to join him! Tax collectors were employed by the Roman government and were despised by the Jews. Further, Jesus went to his house and was surrounded by the dregs of society! Was Jesus going there to hang out with everybody? No.

Jesus taught God-based lessons on how we should live to be acceptable to the heavenly Father. He had a higher purpose...

*<sup>11</sup>When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, why is your teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners? <sup>12</sup>But when Jesus heard this, he said, it is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup>But go and learn what this means: I desire compassion, and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*



Jesus did not go to Matthew's home to be a part of Matthew's community; he went there to show Matthew's community a way to see life and live differently - on a higher, godlier plane. The Pharisees, who were not part of Matthew's community, challenged Jesus' apparent acceptance of these sinners and their lifestyles.



Back to our question. Prophetically the lamb was slain *before the foundation of the world*, so God must have accepted the world the way it was since it was all pre-planned for, right? No, God did *not* accept the world the way it was - that is why we needed the sacrifice of Jesus. It had to be brought back to the way it was. When Jesus went to Matthew's house and they asked why he would be with sinners, he said because they were the ones who were sick. They needed to get better. He would help raise their lives up if they would let him. He was not accepting them; he was loving them and showing them how to be acceptable.

*But go and learn what this means: I desire compassion, and not sacrifice - What was Jesus telling the Pharisees they needed to learn?*

#### **He was quoting prophecy to them:**

Hosea 6:4-7: (KJV) <sup>4</sup>(To Israel) ...*what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.* <sup>5</sup>*Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth...* <sup>6</sup>*For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.* <sup>7</sup>*But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.*

Israel was sinning, and God was *not* accepting them as they were. On the surface, Israel could get back into favor through the rituals and sacrifices of the Law. This was an external way to show their allegiance to God. But God told them *I desire mercy and not sacrifice* - in other words, do not bring an animal to sacrifice when your heart is in the wrong place. All you are doing is performing a ritual; I am looking for the transformation of your heart so *it* can be acceptable. You have to change.

God wanted heart dedication and compliance, not rituals! Even in the Old Testament, heart condition was important.

***Acceptance doesn't mean resignation; it means understanding that something is what it is and that there's got to be a way through it. — Michael J. Fox***

We cannot just sit by and say, “God called me; He is going to have to take me as I am.” No, He called you because He loves you but now change and come up higher.

#### **This comes right after Peter proclaimed Jesus as Messiah. Follow Jesus' words:**

Luke 9:21-24: (NASB) <sup>21</sup>*But he warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone,* <sup>22</sup>*saying, The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.* <sup>23</sup>*And he was saying to them all, if anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.* <sup>24</sup>*For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, he is the one who will save it.*



If we call ourselves Christians, are we willing to live like this? Are we fighting against our own preferences and will to be like Jesus? Are we asking him to accept us as we are or are we seeking to accept him so we can become as he wants us to be? It comes down to *deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me.*



Being acceptable to God is not a simple matter.

**Do God and Jesus not accept us as we are at all or do they accept us as we are with certain conditions?**

This certainly can be confusing, probably because we live in a time when acceptance of everyone without question as normal and well-adjusted has become a societal requirement, no matter what someone's stance might be. We are here addressing a standard that is higher than individual human emotion and preference and this is not a well-received approach.

To be acceptable to God through Christ, there are standards.



Bottom line, I do not fit all of those standards. I try really hard and fall really short. I need to change. Am I acceptable to God through Christ as I *try* to be, and try to wear the robe of Christ's righteousness to cover me? That is acceptable, but what is underneath - not so much. We have to realize it is Jesus' love for us that gives us the head start so we can start to change.



**"Jesus Loves Me," (Verse two) Listener Kids**

Jesus loves me he who died  
Heaven's gate to open wide  
He will wash away my sin  
Let his little child come in



We should come before Jesus as children. When he loves us, he can start to change us so we can grow into acceptability.

1 Corinthians 13:6: (NASB) *...(love) does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;*

We need to veer away from unrighteousness to be accepted. Love does not find pleasure or wonderment in unrighteousness. God does *not* accept us as we are; that is why Jesus is here. If we want to be Christlike, we will learn to try and approach those higher standards.

### Here is a case in point:

Luke 7:36-50: (NASB) <sup>36</sup>Now one of the Pharisees was requesting him to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

Even though the Pharisees stood against him and this one was skeptical, Jesus accepted the invitation.

<sup>37</sup>And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that he was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, <sup>38</sup>and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing his feet and anointing them with the perfume.

Why would this woman, a sinner, do this? Because *Jesus had already changed her heart* and saved her from the deceitfulness of her own life. This was her humble act of thanksgiving.

 **God runs to you, *Knowing You Are Loved*, Joel Osteen**

- *People can love you conditionally, "If you do right, perform right, treat me right - then I'll love ya. But if you let me down, I'll go find somebody else." When we make mistakes, God doesn't change His mind. You can run away from God instead of turning the other way, God will come running towards you. Quit trying to earn this love. There's nothing you can do to make God love you any more or any less. It's a gift. Just receive it by faith.*

That sounds inspiring, but is dangerous. We *are* supposed to be working towards being pleasing to God. If we keep running away from God, He is going to let us go at some point. This gives a false sense of security and of not having to work hard. That is not the Christian way. God loves us as we are but does not accept us as we are - there is more to it.

<sup>39</sup>Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, *If this man were a prophet he would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching him, that she is a sinner.* <sup>40</sup>And Jesus answered him, *Simon, I have something to say to you. And he replied, Say it, Teacher.*

Here are Jesus' words again. He read Simon's heart and addressed its deficiencies. He saw Simon was making a judgment against the woman. Traditionally the Pharisees removed themselves from the average person and Simon was in that mindset.

***Truth never pleads or compromises or wavers. It invites and awaits your acceptance.***  
— ***Vernon Howard***



God shows us, through Christ, what we have to do and who we have to be to become acceptable, and it is our responsibility to rise up to those standards. It does not mean we become perfect, powerful or self-righteous; it means we adopt Christlikeness in every aspect of our daily lives. That is how we become acceptable.

### **Simon thought Jesus was missing something, but Jesus is about to show him something profound:**

*<sup>41</sup>A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup>When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So, which of them will love him more? <sup>43</sup>Simon answered and said, I suppose the one whom he forgave more. And he said to him, you have judged correctly.*

Jesus' words lay out the lesson, and he commends the Pharisee for the correct answer. However, just because we *know* the right answer does not mean we *live* by the right answer. A lot of Christians can say all the right things, but do they *do* all the right things which help us become acceptable to God?

To clarify, what you physically do is not all that makes us acceptable. It is the attitude of our heart and mind to God through Christ. It is the willingness to leave behind sinful things and cling to righteous things. It is the willingness to be self-sacrificing. These are what help us become acceptable to God.

*<sup>44</sup>Turning toward the woman, he said to Simon,*

He looks at the woman, the sinner, but talks to Simon. Simon knows the focus of Jesus' comments are on this woman. A tense but profound moment is about to unfold.

*do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup>You gave me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss my feet. <sup>46</sup>You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with perfume. <sup>47</sup>For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.*

Here is the core of the matter: The woman changed her life because of Jesus. She was humbled by the change and grateful for the change. The Pharisee was self-righteous and skeptical. Who is acceptable? The woman. Why? Because she acknowledged her faults and came up the pathway to Jesus.

Upon entering the Pharisee's house, Jesus was treated as a commoner instead of an honored guest. The Lord overruled that this woman would be there for this lesson to make Simon realize what he had done. Jesus read his heart and saw the woman's heart was repentant. She was the greater sinner but was forgiven. Simon, trying to be a righteous Pharisee, loved less because he thought he had less to be forgiven.

*<sup>48</sup>Then he said to her, your sins have been forgiven. <sup>49</sup>Those who were reclining at the table with him began to say to themselves, who is this man who even forgives sins? <sup>50</sup>And he said to the woman, your faith has saved you; go in peace.*



*A chat listener contributes [Ephesians 2:5-6](#): But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been*



*saved), so He loved us so much He provided a way to raise us up from the state of death to aliveness in Christ.*

We were dead as a result of sin, but even in that state God loved us so much that He provided a way of acceptableness through Jesus. We have to change regardless of our background, tendency or habit. How much do you love Jesus? How much are you willing to follow his footsteps by following his words?



The woman in Simon’s house anointed Jesus’ feet with balsam, which was very expensive, even beyond the price of gold. They used to anoint kings with balsam - how appropriate to use on Jesus!

**What happens to our habits, preferences and tendencies?  
How much of our old selves can we keep?**

Here is the bottom line: To continue in an acceptable state with God and our Lord Jesus, we must continue to work at rooting out all habits, preferences and tendencies that do not promote godliness. This is a tall order, but remember we are judged on our sincere effort and not on our results.



“Jesus Loves Me,” (Chorus two) Listener Kids

Yes, Jesus loves me  
Yes, Jesus loves me  
Yes, Jesus loves me  
The Bible tells me so

1 Corinthians 13:7: (NASB) *...(love) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*



**CLAIM ASSETS**

**What does God expect of us as followers of Christ? First, claim the assets set before you to rise above:**

**2 Peter 1:3-11:** (NASB) <sup>3</sup>seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup>For by these He has granted to us his precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

It is a great asset to be given precious, magnificent promises by God. We can hold onto no greater asset!

**Here is an example of a wonderful promise, guaranteed by God:**

**Revelation 2:10:** (KJV) *Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.*

This means you were loved first, you worked through your life with sacrifice to become acceptable to God. He shows that acceptability with a crown of life.

*Having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust - Our lust defines our sinful state. The Greek word for lust here is bigger than in a sexual context. It means all of the deep desires we have that pull us in different directions, taking us away from a higher, spiritual way.*

**Second, apply yourself to higher standards for a life culminating in the exercise of benevolent love:**

<sup>5</sup>Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, <sup>6</sup>and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, <sup>7</sup>and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

We want to work our way up to the life that culminates in the love we described in 1 Corinthians 13.

This list is what must be applied in order to reach the gift of the divine nature.

*Moral excellence* - not just a subjective morality, but moral excellence

*Knowledge* - scriptural knowledge, spiritual knowledge

*Self-control* - so lacking in our world today

*Perseverance* - keep going, even when you do not feel like it

God's Spirit gives us the ability to accomplish these things; it is not because we are so smart or great. Our desire is to serve God and He gives us His Spirit to help us. Without His power and influence working within us, we would be helpless.

Does God accept us as we are? No. Does He love us as we are? Yes - more than we could ever fathom. But do not confuse God's love for us with His acceptance of us. God did so love the world that He gave His son, Jesus. The world will have their opportunity in the kingdom, but we have ours now. By God's grace, we can become acceptable.



**HIGHER STANDARDS**



**Third, live the evidence of a godly character. For this to be we must continually keep ourselves in check:**

*<sup>8</sup>For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.*

There should be evidence of a godly character in our lives. We cannot claim the name of Christ and then do what everybody else does. Our life should be a reflection of godly character. It does not need to be perfect, but it should be improving.



*Purification from your former sins* - God does not accept us unless we have put on Christ's righteousness, but when we live outside of that righteousness we fall back into that "no" category again. Stay with it and continue to rise above!

This does not mean you have to preach to everyone you meet, but you should come across as someone honorable, respectful and full of integrity. When people leave your presence, they should be thinking, "Wow, that was a good person!"

**Fourth, flourish in your new and living approach to your life, for this is how we are acceptable to God:**

*<sup>10</sup>Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup>for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.*

Growth and change will start to work in your life!

*Leadership is particularly necessary to ensure ready acceptance of the unfamiliar and that which is contrary to tradition. – Cyril Falls*

We must strive towards God. We cannot assume He will be chasing after us no matter what we do.

 **God's favorite, *Knowing You Are Loved*, Joel Osteen**

- *When you start seeing yourself as His favorite, you'll go to Him with confidence, you'll pray bold prayers, you'll ask Him for your dreams, you'll believe for your health to turn around, you'll expect new doors to open. Not because of who you are, but because of who your Father is. You know He'll go out of His way to be good to you.*

We see this differently. What he is suggesting is you assume you are God's favorite and then you can ask Him for anything your heart desires, and He will open up your dreams. We disagree. He will open up His will for you if you are willing to follow it. *Oftentimes His will does not equal our dreams!*

What is most important? How much you love Jesus and are you willing to follow his words.



**Romans 6:1-5:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup>May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup>Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death?

You have heard the phrase “let sleeping dogs lie”? Let’s let “our dead will remain buried!”

<sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection.

Acceptability to God comes through Jesus and our willingness to be buried with him. We cannot hold onto what was while we strive for what God wants us to be.

This is a choice. Choose acceptability! Choose Christlikeness! Be willing to let go of how you “feel” you are and how you define yourself and find yourself in God through Christ, in a new way, a new will, a way that is higher and spiritual. This will be glory to God!

**So, does God accept us as we are?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!**

**And now even more to think about...  
only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!**



**Never forget the need for love as our basis for all things:**

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7:** (NASB) <sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup>does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, <sup>6</sup>does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; <sup>7</sup>bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.



**We must be particularly aware of the standards that we accept within our fellowship - our environment is to be different - higher than the world around us:**

**1 Corinthians 5:1-5:** (NASB) *<sup>1</sup>It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. <sup>2</sup>You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. <sup>3</sup>For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. <sup>4</sup>In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, <sup>5</sup>I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

**1 Corinthians 5:9-11:** (NASB) *<sup>9</sup>I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; <sup>10</sup>I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup>But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.*

**Matthew 7:1-6:** (NASB) *<sup>1</sup>Do not judge so that you will not be judged. <sup>2</sup>For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. <sup>3</sup>Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>4</sup>Or how can you say to your brother, 'let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. <sup>6</sup>Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.*

**As true Christians are we really granted a lifetime pass into God's kingdom, even if we choose to walk away?**

**Hebrews 10:26-31:** (NASB) *<sup>26</sup>For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup>but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. <sup>28</sup>Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup>How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup>For we know Him who said, vengeance is mine, I will repay. And again, the LORD will judge His people. <sup>31</sup>It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

**This is an article about self-absorption. Very Interesting!**

(Source: [http://www.lifescrpt.com/well-being/articles/c/common\\_traits\\_of\\_the\\_self-centered\\_person.aspx](http://www.lifescrpt.com/well-being/articles/c/common_traits_of_the_self-centered_person.aspx))

**Common Traits of The Self-Centered Person:**

It's no wonder why self-centeredness is typically viewed as the most unappealing personality trait in a potential friend or partner. Most of us struggle to maintain a sense of compassion and understanding toward others. Self-centered people, on the other hand, don't bother to take the time to understand another person's point-of-view or feelings. Here is a look into the world of the self-centered person and an explanation of common personality traits associated with self-centeredness.

An article for New Scientist Magazine entitled "Self-Centered Cultures Narrow Your Viewpoint" recently reported that cultures that emphasize individualism, such as America, fail at being able to infer another person's perspective. Cultures that emphasize interdependence, on the other hand, like those in Asia, are easily able to put themselves in the shoes of others and be more empathetic.



"A Texas corporation 'aiming to improve productivity,' told its employees to look in the mirror and say, 'I am beautiful' 100 times before coming to work. In contrast, a Japanese supermarket instructed its employees to begin their day by telling each other 'you are beautiful,'" the author Roxanne Khamsi wrote.

What is it about American culture that applauds being self-centered? And why is it that so many Americans take the bait? Our current culture not only supports, but requests, that individuals put themselves and their own happiness first. According to Mark Drummond, a psychologist who specializes in personality disorders, "being 'self-caring' is considered healthy, but many mistake that for being self-centered."

Young people today do not show the same amount of concern that youth of past generations expressed for the state of their country or for current affairs that either directly affect (or will soon directly affect) them and their loved ones. Self-caring means that you have concern for others, but not at the expense of yourself. Those of today's generation have taken it to an unprecedented level and seem to take pride in being self-centered and for caring only about their needs and wants.

"They are completely self-driven and more concerned with their image and materialistic things than issues that affect the entire country and even the rest of the world," Drummond said.

Self-centered people are not easy to spot; they are capable of being personable and kind upon meeting new people. Those who are self-centered know they are, on some level, and are usually aware of how unappealing the quality is.

"You can't really tell that a person is selfish immediately; it usually takes forming a serious friendship or relationship with them before it becomes explicitly clear that they are self-centered," Drummond said.

There are various degrees of being self-centered, but the general traits are the same: putting themselves first, only caring about their needs and wants, being unable to see another's perspective, being uncaring of others. There are times we all have been guilty of one or all of those traits, but what sets self-centered people apart is that they behave that way all the time.

Those who are very self-centered may even go as far as lying or manipulating to get their way or make things work out in a way that favors them. A study entitled the "fixed total sacrifice effect" illustrates what it is to be completely self-centered. Subjects who had previously been diagnosed as self-centered were given something that they wanted and that others in the room needed. It was concluded that those who are self-centered use a "two-stage reasoning," in which they determine the amount they want to keep for themselves and then distribute the remaining amount, if any, among those who are actually in need.

If there is a person in your life who seems exceedingly self-centered, he or she may suffer from narcissistic personality disorder. According to Dr. Dan Neuharth, "People with narcissistic personality disorder lack a healthy emotional core. They are driven by a moment-to-moment monitoring of their worth. Since they find it difficult to provide self-worth, they seek it from external sources. "Dealing with self-centered people can be very difficult and frustrating, especially if you are in a serious relationship with them. Those who are self-centered tend to treat other people badly because they view their partners as nothing more than objects that are in place to feed them emotionally. If you are romantically linked to someone who is self-centered, it's almost as if you are stuck in a catch 22; if you leave, they will convince



themselves you were not good enough, but if you stay, you validate their behavior by giving them the impression they are worth staying with, despite their abusive ways.

When dealing with a self-centered person, keep a few things in mind. The first is don't try to change him or her. "Individuals with this disorder rarely think they have a problem until they are on the verge of losing everything. Even then, their primary focus may be to maintain their veneer rather than to get to the root of their problem," Neuharth said.

Secondly, don't play their game. Stay true to yourself and don't ever partake in behavior that is beneath you. It will inevitably become very difficult to be kind to a self-centered person who is unkind to you, but you can alleviate any feelings of anger by focusing on the person you are and continuing to like that person. It's also important to be realistic and understand that the self-centered person will never consider your needs. The self-centered person can have moments of generosity and charm, but for the most part, they are unaware of your needs and uninterested in meeting them. The most important thing to remember when dealing with a self-centered person is to remain realistic. If you struggle with low self-esteem, being around someone who seems so confident may give you a temporary boost. In the long run, however, you are better off attending to the causes of your low self-image - even if it means a period of loneliness, Neuharth said. If you think that you may be self-centered or narcissistic or if you have a loved one who is, therapy is often recommended so that you or your loved one can learn to form happy, healthy relationships.