



Thank you for downloading the
CQ Rewind - Summary Only Version!

Each week, the **Summary Only** version provides you with approximately four pages of brief excerpts from the program, along with Scripture citations.

If you would like to receive the **CQ Rewind FULL EDITION** at no charge, simply sign up at www.ChristianQuestions.com.

The **FULL EDITION** of approximately 10-12 pages includes comprehensive excerpts from the program, fully quoted Scriptures, graphics, illustrations, and even extra study points that time prevented us from covering during the live program.



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

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*? ¹⁶*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.

ACCEPTANCE OBSERVATION: GOD ACCEPT THOSE WHO SEEK HIM IN WAYS ACCEPTABLE TO HIM.



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? 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 do YOU love Jesus? John 14:23-24: 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.

Mark 10:17-27: *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. 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. 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. 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."

ACCEPTANCE OBSERVATION: TO BE A TRUE FOLLOWER OF JESUS IS TO DIVEST OURSELVES OF ANY EARTHLY ATTACHMENT AND INSTEAD ATTACH OURSELVES TO JESUS' WORDS. THIS IS THE PATH TO TRUE ACCEPTANCE!

Based on all of this, it looks like a Christian's life is a tough challenge! It is all about sacrifice, yet Jesus said that 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.

John 3:16 tells us that *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever 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: 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? **So, what is more important - mercy and compassion or sacrifice?** Matthew 9:9-13: *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. 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: 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. 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: 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*.

ACCEPTANCE OBSERVATION: TO MANY, JESUS APPEARED TO ACCEPT PEOPLE AS THEY WERE, BUT IN REALITY HE WAS LOVING THEM SO MUCH THAT HE WAS SHOWING THEM HOW TO CHANGE - HOW TO RISE ABOVE THEIR LIVES.

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.

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) **Please see the CQ Rewind Full Edition for the summary discussion of this important exchange between Jesus and the Pharisee regarding the woman who anointed his feet.**

ACCEPTANCE OBSERVATION: OUR ACCEPTABILITY GROWS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD AS WE GROW IN THE SIGHT OF GOD!

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



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: 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: 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.

Third, live the evidence of a godly character. For this to be we must continually keep ourselves in check: ⁸*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.* ⁹*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: ¹⁰*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;* ¹¹*for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.*

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

ACCEPTANCE OBSERVATION: OUR ACCEPTABILITY TO GOD IS NEVER ACCOMPLISHED BY DOING THINGS OUR WAY. IT IS ALWAYS ACCOMPLISHED BY SUBMITTING TO GOD'S WILL AS WE FOLLOW CHRIST.

Romans 6:1-5: 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...!*