

INTERACTIVE TEACHING/LEARNING GUIDE
Lesson 6

SESSION TITLE: “ACCEPTING ONE ANOTHER”

FOCAL PASSAGE: (Rom. 15:7; Rom. 14:1-4, 21)

Central Teaching/Learning Aim: To help the learner examine how accepting he/she is with fellow believers who may look or do things differently and to help him/her be a unifying presence in his/her SGM.

I. Creating Interest in the Series (Hook)

A. Object Lesson – A box of aluminum foil.

Share - the following story:

When Chris Kirk returned home from a trip to Los Angeles in early January, he discovered that everything in his apartment had been coated with aluminum foil. The walls, ceiling, cabinets, and everything in between shimmered after a prank orchestrated by Kirk’s longtime friend Luke Trerice who was staying in the apartment while Kirk was gone.

Trerice covered everything in the apartment with about 4,000 square feet of foil, which cost about \$100. He enlisted several friends to complete the job. They carefully unrolled toilet paper, wrapped it in foil, and then rolled it back up again. Trerice and his helpers covered Kirk’s book and compact disc collections, but made sure each CD case and book would open and close normally. They even covered every piece of spare change with foil.

When asked about the strange joke, Kirk said, “As I was trying to sleep last night, I realized that, actually it’s creepy.” When asked if he would ever allow Trerice to stay at his apartment unsupervised again, Kirk said, “I don’t know. We’ll see.”

Trerice said the idea was done on the spur of the moment. He said, “I really don’t even consider it art. I consider it a psychology project. He seems to be upbeat, so I consider this a success.”

---Associated Press, Apartment Encased in Aluminum Foil, January 8, 2004

State – This was a creative way to use aluminum foil. What is the real use of aluminum foil? (It is used to isolate foods from one another and to insulate foods for faster cooking.) Imagine if everything in our SGM room was covered in foil and every individual was wrapped in foil. There would be no human contact. We would exist in isolation. We are not to live an aluminum foil existence. Christians are to accept one another just as we are. We can’t isolate or insulate ourselves from other Christians if we expect to grow in Christ.

Read – (Rom. 15:7)

State – Today we will discuss how we are to accept one another in our SGM just as we are, and how we should not do anything that would damage our relationships with fellow believers.

B. Optional Method – Movie Clip “Shrek”

Start: 45:50:00

Stop: 47:50:00

Synopsis:

The animated movie Shrek celebrates the worth of society’s undervalued people. It revolves around a boorish ogre, Shrek, who finds a friend in a talking donkey (voiced by Eddie Murphy) and unexpectedly falls in love with a princess (voiced by Cameron Diaz), whom he rescues from a castle. This fairytale spoof emphasizes how humans place too much importance on outward appearances.

After freeing the princess, Shrek and Donkey escort her back to the village in keeping with the prince’s orders. Because the journey is long, they decide to camp out. Around the campfire, Donkey talks to

Shrek about what life will be like once they return to Shrek's home, a humble swamp.

Looking up at the sky, Donkey asks, "Hey Shrek, what are we going to do when we get back to our swamp, anyway?"

"Our swamp?" Shrek challenges. "There's no our. There's just me and my swamp, and the first thing I'm going to do is build a ten-foot wall around my land."

Donkey is surprised. He thought they had developed a friendship that would result in sharing their lives and possessions once the quest was over.

"You cut me deep, Shrek!" Donkey confesses. "You cut me real deep just now. You know what I think? This whole wall thing is just a way to keep somebody out."

The two argue and exchange verbal jabs. At last Donkey asks, "Who are you trying to keep out? Just tell me that, okay?"

"Everyone! Okay?" Shrek exclaims.

"Hey, what's your problem, Shrek? What you got against the whole world, anyway?"

The huge ogre seems almost childlike as he candidly explains, "I'm not the one with the problem. It's the whole world that seems to have a problem with me. People take one look at me and go 'Ahhh! Help! Run! It's a big, stupid, ugly ogre!' They judge me before they even know me. That's why I'm better off alone."

Donkey joins Shrek and says, "You know what? When we first met, I didn't think you were just a big, stupid, ugly ogre."

"Yeah, I know," Shrek acknowledges with gratitude. For the first time he realizes someone has looked beyond his outward appearance and accepted him.

---*Shrek (Dreamworks, 2001), written by Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio, directed by Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson*

State – Christians are to treat other Christians like Donkey treated Shrek. We are to accept one another regardless of outward appearance, past or current sin, socio-economic level, etc.

Read – (Rom. 15:7)

Today - we will discuss how we are to accept one another in our SGM just as we are, and how we should not do anything that would damage our relationships with fellow believers.

C. Optional Method

Object Lesson – "A Stranger"

Recruit a friend who is not known by your SGM members and ask him to come to your SGM room dressed where he would obviously stand out--- maybe unshaven and dirty, maybe acting sheepish and quiet, not talking to anyone. As you begin the lesson have a time for feedback.

Ask - the stranger to introduce him/herself.

Ask - members how they reacted to the stranger. Why?

Ask- the stranger how he/she felt---welcomed or shunned?

Try to get honest feedback from all parties.

Read – (Rom. 15:7)

Ask – How do you think we must have appeared to Christ when He accepted us?

State – Today we will discuss how we are to accept one another in our SGM just as we are and how we should not do anything that would damage our relationships with fellow believers.

BOOK Getting Into the Word

A. Utilize - the Discussion Guide to examine the scripture.

LOOK Getting the Word into Life

A. Distribute the handout; *“Living Unconditionally”* and guide members to complete it.

TOOK Conclusion

IV. Conclusion (Took)

A. Share the following story:

I remember distinctly an occasion where I felt unaccepted in a church. I went to a church (which I will not name) in view of a call to be the Minister of Education. I had my wife and two small children with me and we were attending our first service together in this church. I ushered them to the second row in the auditorium. (We had to sit close because we were being introduced.)

As we sat there waiting for the service to begin, I noticed a large man standing next to me in the aisle. After a few minutes I finally looked up at him and asked, “Is there something you need?” He looked down at me and spoke five words that I will never forget. “You are in my seat.” I offered to move but he said he would just have to find another seat and walked off.

I had never felt so unaccepted in a church in my life. I should have taken it as a sign from God to not go to that church but I didn’t and went anyway. That man became one of my good friends and best adult workers, but when I think of him I still remember those five words, “You are in my seat.”

May we never have that attitude in our SGM’s or in our church. May we think of fellow believer’s needs first, accepting one another to the glory of God.

---Carter Shotwell,
1/29/04

B. Optional Method

Share – the following story:

Pastor Lee Strobel shares this account:

We were doing a baptism service. We told people before they came up to the platform to be baptized to take a piece of paper, write down a few of the sins they’ve committed, and fold the paper. When they came up to the platform, there was a large wooden cross on the stage. Take that piece of paper, take a pin, and pin it to the cross, because the Bible says our sins are nailed to the cross with Jesus Christ, and fully paid for by his death. Then turn and come to the pastor to be baptized.

I want to read you a letter a woman wrote who was baptized in one of those services. She said: I remember my fear. In fact, it was the most fear I remember in my life. I wrote as tiny as I could on that piece of paper the word abortion. I was so scared someone would open the paper and read it and find out it was me. I wanted to get up and walk out of the auditorium during the service, the guilt and fear were that strong.

When my turn came, I walked toward the cross, and I pinned the paper there. I was directed to a pastor to be baptized. He looked me straight in the eyes, and I thought for sure that he was going to read this

terrible secret I kept from everybody for so long. But instead, I felt like God was telling me, I love you. It's okay. You've been forgiven. I felt so much love for me, a terrible sinner. It's the first time I ever really felt forgiveness and unconditional love. It was unbelievable, indescribable.

---Lee Strobel, "Meet the Jesus I know," *Preaching Today*

State – May this be the spirit and attitude of acceptance in our SGM. We have all sinned and fallen short but we can all be forgiven. Who do we need to accept this week?

C. Optional Method – Movie Clip “Remember the Titans”

Start: 1:27:20

Stop: 1:29:20

Synopsis:

Remember the Titans is a movie based on the true story of a Virginia high school football team's climb to the top. The movie is also about a team's ability, and ultimately an entire town's ability, to deal with racial integration in 1971. Because of government mandated redistricting, black students and white students, for the first time in their lives, had to attend the same high school.

Early in the movie Gary, a white athlete, and Julius, a black athlete, display overt racial hostility toward one another. Gary is an all-American football player and Julius is a star defensive player. At a two-week long summer camp, Gary and Julius are assigned a room together. When Julius puts a poster on the wall that depicts several black athletes winning Olympic medals, Gary says, "I'm not looking at that for two weeks."

Julius responds, "Well, you better get some x-ray vision, Superman."

When Gary attempts to rip the poster off the wall, a brawl ensues between the black and white players. Just when it seems the blacks and whites will never overcome their animosity toward one another, Gary and Julius have a heart-to-heart conversation. Julius confronts Gary regarding Gary's silence when the white team members deliberately miss blocks for the black players. During the next practice, Gary confronts a white player for this behavior. His act of leadership is a catalyst for change for the rest of the team.

Initially, their motivation to reconcile appears to be based upon their joint desire to win football games. Later, however, they are motivated by something stronger. After the Titans win the regional championship, Gary is involved in a serious car accident that leaves him paralyzed from the waist down. The entire football team is present at the hospital, but Gary requests to see only Julius. Mustering all the emotional strength he has, Julius walks into the room. A nurse immediately responds, "Only kin are allowed in here."

Gary reassures her, "It's alright, Alice." Jokingly, he continues, "Can't you see the family resemblance? He's my bother."

There is some laughter, but there is truth to the comment. As Julius stands at Gary's bedside, Gary says, "When I first met you, I was scared of you, Julius. I only saw what I was afraid of." Through tears he confesses, "But then I saw I was only hating my brother."

---*Remember the Titans, (Disney, 2000), written by Adam Coleman Howard and Gregory Allen Howard, directed by Boaz Yakin*

State – May we never hate our brothers and sisters in Christ. Is there a fellow Christian you need to make amends with this week?

Close in prayer.

DISCUSSION GUIDE
(Teacher's Copy)

1. What types of self-imposed, tradition-based standards (as opposed to Biblical standards) have you observed in church life?
2. What condition was your life in when you first realized Christ loved you?
3. Knowing that Christ accepted you “just as you were”, how can you develop this attitude to fellow Christians and strangers you encounter?
4. What does (Romans 14:3) teach about accepting other believers with different views on non-essential practices?

We are to love others even if they do or do not do certain activities that we believe to be right or wrong.

5. What is the significance of (Romans 14:21) as it relates to accepting other Christians?

We should be willing to give up personal freedoms if a fellow believer struggles with the issue.

6. List examples where (Romans 14:21) could be applicable in an SGM.
7. If a fellow believer is obviously living in the bondage of sin, how should we help him?

- a) (Matthew 18:15-17) **reprove in private, take a friend, tell the church**
- b) (Galatians 6:1) **restore the person in gentleness**
- c) (James 5:19-20) **help turn the sinner back to Christ**

8. What do these passages teach about showing favoritism?

- a) (1 Timothy 5:21) **we are to avoid all partiality**
- b) (James 2:1-5, 9) **we are not to show partiality ---it is a sin**

9. Do you think partiality is shown to people with material wealth at our church?

10. What is the result of full acceptance of one another? (Romans 15:7c)

It brings glory to God.

11. a. Is there anyone you have shunned to whom you need to make amends?
b. What steps do you need to take to make things right?

“LIVING UNCONDITIONALLY”

It takes unconditional love and acceptance for a group of Christians to fulfill their full potential. How well do you rate in the following scenarios?

Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5.
(1 = Always judgmental, 5 = Always accepting)

_____ A person of a different race sits by you at church.

_____ A person who may not live up to your standards sits by you in your SGM.

_____ A newcomer visits your SGM and sits in your chair.

_____ A person in your SGM who participates in an activity that conflicts with your tradition but is permissible under God.

_____ A wealthy friend attends my SGM.

Work through the following steps to grow in unconditional living:

Step 1 Live by the principles outlined in (Romans 14).

- a. How can I be more accepting and less judgmental towards other believers who participate in activities I agree or disagree with?
- b. Are there any personal liberties I need to forfeit for the sake of others who may have a problem with an activity I participate in?

Step 2 Do not accept or reject others based on my own standards. List possible examples:

Step 3 Do I show prejudice or favoritism toward other Christians?

Where has this occurred in the past?

How can I avoid it in the future?

"Bearing with One Another"
Ephesians 4:2-3 and Colossians 3:12-13

Monday - Read Ephesians 4:2-3; Matthew 11:29

- What qualities ought to characterize "a life worthy of the calling"?
- Of the virtues listed in verse 2, which one needs to be developed most in your life?
- What relationship will profit from developing that quality now?

Tuesday - Read Ephesians 4:2-3

- What does "make every effort" suggest? What does this say about the importance of unity?
- How would each quality in verse 2 promote unity?
- How does this passage say believers are joined together?

Wednesday - Read Colossians 3:12-13; Ephesians 1:4-6

- Answer the question, "what's it therefore?" after reading verses 1-11.
- How many different "accessories" are you to clothe yourself with?
- Which of these do you need to acquire, mend, or iron? Be careful when you ask for patience!

Thursday - Read Colossians 3:12-13; Ephesians 4:32

- What practical difference does this "new clothing" make in relationships?
- Who's doing the forgiving in verse 13? Are any apologies commanded?
- Is there a limit to the grievances or the forgiveness? Who do you need to forgive today?

Friday - Read Colossians 3:12-13

- What contrasts do you see between the "clothes" of the earthly nature (5-11) and those of God's chosen people (12-17)?
- Which aspect of your old nature feels like a comfortable, old pair of jeans? Why is it difficult to remove?
- With what piece of Christ's wardrobe would you like to replace it?

REAL LIFE
“Accepting One Another”
Romans 15:7; 14:1-4, 21

(Exegetical . . . What it meant to the Romans back THEN)
THE CONTENT OF PAUL’S COMMAND TO THE ROMANS,
BASED ON CHRIST’S ACCEPTANCE OF THE ROMAN BELIEVERS
(FORMED INTO THE NEW COMMUNITY – THE CHURCH),
WAS THAT THEY ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER BY NOT JUDGING
AND NOT STUMBLING ONE ANOTHER.

- I. The CONTENT of Paul's Command To The Romans was that, Just as Christ Had Accepted/Welcomed (14:3) Them For The Purpose of Glorifying God, They Accept/Welcome (14:1) One Another, (15:7).
 - A. The Content of Paul's Command To The Romans was that They Accept/Welcome One Another, (7a).
 - B. The Manner in which The Romans were to Accept/Welcome One Another, according to Paul's Command, was Just As Christ Had Accepted/Welcomed Them, (7b).
 - C. The Purpose of The Romans Accepting/Welcoming One Another Just As Christ Had Accepted/Welcomed Them was so that God Would Be Glorified, (7c).

- II. The CONTENT of Paul's Command to the Romans regarding Those with Sensitive Consciences in Areas of Christian Liberty was that They Accept/Welcome Them without Judging Their Consciences in Areas of Christian Liberty, (14:1).
 - A. The Content of Paul's Command to the Romans was that They Accept/ Welcome Others without Judging Their Consciences in Areas of Christian Liberty, (1a).
 - B. The Character of Those Paul Commanded the Romans to Accept/ Welcome was Sensitive in Areas of Christian Liberty (disputable judgments), (1b).

- III. A REASON the Romans were Not To Despise Those with Sensitive Consciences in Areas of Christian Liberty and Not Judge Those with Liberated Consciences was Because God Has Already Accepted/ Welcomed Them, (14:2-3).
 - A. A Difference in Consciences between the Romans was Demonstrated in the Belief of Some, being Liberated in conscience, that They could Eat Anything while Some, being Sensitive in conscience, could Eat Vegetables Only, (2).
 - B. The Content of Paul's Repeated Command to the Romans was that They Not Despise Those with a Sensitive Conscience or Judge Those with a Liberated Conscience, (3a).
 - C. The Reason the Romans were Not To Despise Those with Sensitive Consciences in Areas of Christian Liberty and Not Judge Those with Liberated Consciences was Because God Has Already Accepted/Welcomed Each One, (3b).

- IV. A Further REASON the Romans were Not To Judge Another's Conscience (whether Sensitive or Liberated) was because God was Able To Make Them Stand (in the Day of Coming Judgment), (14:4).
 - A. A Reason the Romans were Not To Judge Another's Conscience was because The Other Individual was Not Their Servant To Judge, (4a).
 - B. A Reason the Romans were Not To Judge Another's Conscience was because The Other Individual was God's Servant before Whom They Would Stand or Fall, (4b).
 - C. A Reason the Romans were Not To Judge Another's Conscience was because God was Able To Make The Other Individual Stand (in the Day of Coming Judgment), (4c).

- V. The Concluding PRINCIPLE of Paul to The Romans was That It Was Not Good To Exercise Christian Liberty That Causes A Fellow Believer to Stumble In Sin, (14:21).

(Theological . . . What it means to believers ALWAYS)
THE MASTER-PLANNED COMMUNITY

(ACCEPTED IN CHRIST TO THE GLORY OF GOD)
ACCEPTS ONE ANOTHER.

I. THE MASTER-PLANNED COMMUNITY HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY CHRIST, (15:7b).

II. THE MASTER-PLANNED COMMUNITY ACCEPTS ONE ANOTHER, (15:7a, 14:1a).

III. ACCEPTING ONE ANOTHER MEANS NOT JUDGING ONE ANOTHER ON QUESTIONS OF LIBERTY,
(14:1b-4).

IV. ACCEPTING ONE ANOTHER MEANS NOT STUMBLING ONE ANOTHER INTO SIN, (14:21).

(Pedagogical . . . What it means for us NOW)
ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER.

I. Jesus Christ Accepted Us (you and me) Without Any Favoritism, (15:7b).

- A. Jesus Accepted us not based on Race, Gender, Status, Good Deeds, etc.
- B. Jesus Accepted us Unconditionally - "just as we were."

II. Accept One Another In The Same Way, (15:7a, 14:1a).

("Accept" is "pros-lambano" – pros = intensive "to oneself" and lambano = "accept" or "receive." The concept connotes "without favoritism.")

- A. Ex. 23:3 and do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit.
- B. Lev. 19:15 "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.
- C. Acts 10:34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism (according to race).
- D. Rom. 2:11 For God does not show favoritism.
- E. Eph. 6:9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.
- F. Col. 3:25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.
- G. 1Tim. 5:21 I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.
- H. James 2:1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.
- I. James 2:9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

III. Acceptance includes . . .

- A. . . . Not Judging Another's Liberty, (14:1b-4).
 - 1. If it's sin, deal with it, (Mat 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5:1-5; Gal 6:1; Ja 5:19-20).
 - 2. If it's not sin, don't judge another's freedom, tradition, preference.
- B. . . . Not Stumbling a Weaker Member into Sinning, (14:21).
 - 1. You may instruct the Weaker Member, (see 14:19).
 - 2. You must not stumble the Weaker Member into Sinning.

IV. Full Acceptance of One Another will Get God Glory, (15:7c).