

Week Two: *God's Acceptance and Your Own*
Galatians 1:6-10, 13-17

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Please begin by reading Galatians 1:6-7. This week, we're going to dig into how our own self-acceptance differs from God's acceptance of us. To do this, we must first admit that our self-acceptance has been greatly impacted by how our world has taught us to view and criticize ourselves. I believe that two things are at the root of this:
 - a. We feel a need to be accepted and worthy.
 - b. We love to compare ourselves.Which one can you most relate to?

2. God created us with a tenderness and desire for connection. In order to be truly connected, we need to be accepted. The problem with this is that we live in a society that is competitive and stresses "keeping up with the Joneses." Because of this, we have often felt rejected rather than accepted. When are some times that others have made you feel unworthy or rejected?

3. Being accepted by others is good and important. However, we need to remember that the only acceptance and inclusion that matters is when we are accepted by God and included in his kingdom. How does knowing that you are loved and accepted by him change how you view yourself?

4. Another thing the world has taught us is that in order to be really accepted and loved, you need to be among the "best." What areas can you think of in which the world compares people against one another (e.g., beauty, talent, wealth, etc.)?

5. Which of these comparison traps do you fall into the most? For example, I fall into the traps of comparing my own "success" and "beauty" to others.

6. Read Psalm 139:14. What does this reveal about how God feels about you, and how he wants you to measure your worth?

7. Please finish your FIFTEEN with a prayer. Pray, "God, I thank you that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Thank you for renewing my mind so that I can be filled with confidence in knowing that I am enough. Thank you for making me a part of your kingdom."

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Please read Romans 3:23-24. In the first two chapters of Genesis, we learn a lot about how God created our world. Among the last of what he created, he made Adam. Man is a unique and precious part of God's Creation. I once heard a pastor say (forgive my paraphrasing here), "God spent the first several days of Creation effectively making incredible birthday presents for man." I loved that, because it reminded me just how much God loves to amaze us with his power, glory, and love. Do you feel like your attitude toward yourself reflects just how special you are to God?

9. In Romans 3, Paul says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” There are two very important parts to these verses. The first is that we are not perfect. Please, if you have been holding on to a need to be perfect, let it go! No other person in the history of the world (except for Jesus) has been able to achieve the perfection you are laboring for. Let me be clear. God is not pleased with you because of how perfect and non-sinful you are. Have you been feeling the pressure to be perfect? How?

10. So, if God isn’t pleased with you because you are perfect, then why is he pleased with you? That question is answered by Romans 3:24: “and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” God is crazy about you. So much so that he sacrificed God the Son to win you back from sin, death, and the devil. Because of this sacrifice, those that look to Jesus as Lord and Savior are made holy! God the Father looks at you and is pleased. He sees his perfect child. How does knowing this relieve the pressure to be perfect?

11. What are some simple ways that you can show this same grace to others in your everyday life?

12. As you finish out your FIFTEEN in prayer, consider praying these words: “Heavenly Father, thank you for redeeming me through your Son. Help me to remember that I am holy and precious in your sight. Help me to see others the way that you see them.”

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

13. Today, we’re going to reflect on how our past can hinder our self-acceptance. Please take some time to read Psalm 139. Yes, all of it! What stands out to you from this psalm?

14. Our past contains a lot of memories. Some of those memories bring pride, joy, and laughter. However, some parts of our past are not so wonderful. The past can make us feel ashamed, angry, remorseful, embarrassed, or downright guilty. I know this might be difficult, but what parts of your past bring up one or more of the emotions I named?

15. How do you think these parts of your past have affected your self-acceptance?

16. Read Psalm 139:1-4. This explains how God is always present, and he always knows our future. Was God surprised by any mistakes or situations from your past?

17. Recall Romans 3:23-24 from yesterday’s FIFTEEN. Have you felt that your past has defined you? How does this verse change that?

18. Psalm 139:14 says, “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” You are one of his works. That means that you, despite anything from your past, are wonderful. Like the psalmist, do you know that full well?

19. Finish out your FIFTEEN with a prayer. Pray: “Jesus, thank you for defeating the devil’s lies about my past. Remind me that my past does not define who I am now, and who I will be. Help me to show others the power of healing I have found in your name.”

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

20. Today, we’re going to focus on living in self-acceptance and accepting the imperfections of today. Take a minute to reflect on these lyrics from a song called “Bulletproof.”

*I used to live like I was under attack
Dodging arrows from my past
I had no hope for tomorrow
Felt so much pressure yes I thought I would crack
But now there’s no looking back
I’m moving forward ‘cuz I know..
I know You got this whole thing under control
My soul is untouchable because
You’ve already won me
My victory is not in this flesh and bone
It’s in the cross and I know
Nobody’s taking it from me*

Take a look at that first verse. Can you relate to the songwriter’s feelings about “dodging arrows from your past?” How has Jesus changed that?

21. Now, focus on the second verse. What has given the songwriter peace about his or her past, present, and future?

22. Do you believe this verse applies to you as well? How has this given you peace for today?

23. Why do you think this song is called “Bulletproof”?

24. End today’s FIFTEEN with a prayer: “Holy Spirit, thank you for your peace and presence. Thank you for giving me the power to live today knowing that I am holy and ‘bulletproof’ in You.”

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

25. Today, we’re going to focus on people-pleasing versus pleasing God. People-pleasing is a problem that is disguised as a virtue. Simply put, it is the ability to put others before yourself (and often, God), and the inability to say “no.” Signs of people-pleasing would be having a strong aversion to conflict and becoming too involved in activities because you have a hard time rejecting someone who needs help. You may even alter your personality or appearance because you want the acceptance of others. Do you feel you struggle with people-pleasing? How so?

26. Why do you believe people-pleasing is a struggle for so many people?

27. When writing this, I was surprised at how many verses spoke about the dangers of people-pleasing. For example, read John 5:44. Does this verse surprise you?

28. What does this verse say about the dangers of people-pleasing?

29. Read Galatians 1:10. Why do you think Paul says that if he is seeking the approval of man, he cannot be a servant of Christ?

30. The great news is, seeking the approval of a perfect, loving God is so much better than seeking the approval of finicky, sinful people! Not only that, but looking to God for your acceptance and approval, rather than people-pleasing, can actually show *others* just how good God is. Why do you think this is true?

31. Finish out your FIFTEEN by praying to God, thanking him for his acceptance and love. If you're struggling to find words, consider praying this prayer: Pray: "God, thank you for accepting and loving me, despite my shortcomings. Help me to see myself the way you see me. Help me to show others your love for them."