**Mutual Acceptance**

Romans 14:1-12 (NIV)

*“Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters.****2****One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.****3****The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them.****4****Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.*

***5****One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.****6****Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.****7****For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone.****8****If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.****9****For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.*

***10****You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans+14%3A1-12&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-28291a" \o "See footnote a)]? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.****11****It is written:*

*“‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,
‘every knee will bow before me;
    every tongue will acknowledge God.’”[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans+14%3A1-12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28292b)*]*

***12****So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.”*

***7****Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*Rom. 15:7 (NIV)

1. **The Priority of Christian Community (why it really matters)**
	1. God created us for relationship - Gen. 2:18
	2. The Gospel is all about relationship
		1. Jesus restores us to loving relationship with God - 2 Cor. 5:18-19
		2. Jesus calls us to loving relationship with one another - *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.* John 15:12
	3. The church is a community
		1. *Ekklesia -* called out assembly or congregation.
		2. Family of God (Eph. 2:19)
		3. Community is both a reality to be acknowledged and a priority to be pursued
2. **The Challenge of Unity with Diversity in the Christian Community**
	1. In Romans 14 and 15 Paul looks the church and knows that a healthy church will have a lot of diversity in it.
		1. Believers at different places in their walks with God
		2. Strong faith/weak faith
		3. Different convictions (celebrate certain holidays/all days alike)
		4. Different doctrines
	2. How do we promote unity with diversity?
		1. The temptation to seek unity without diversity
		2. Beautifulpeople.com rejects - is there a beautifulchristian.com algorithm?
		3. Paul appeals for mutual acceptance - *Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. Rom. 15:1*
		4. Accepting one another plays a vital role in the building of Christian community

Unpack this in three points (apologies for the alliteration, but I think it works in this case)…

* The Boundaries of Mutual Acceptance
* The Basis of Mutual Acceptance
* The Beauty of Mutual Acceptance
1. **The Boundaries of Mutual Acceptance**
	1. Does this mean the church is to be accepting of everyone and everything? Does verse 10, "You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister?" silence all judgment and critical assessment?
		1. Context: Paul is dealing with differences and diversity over *disputable matters.* Some have labeled these non-essential matters.
		2. Weak faith/strong faith (these are judgments)
			1. Eat meat/not eat meat
			2. Observe one day over another/every day alike
		3. These differences are issues of conscience, not of legalism
		4. Both sides are tempted to look down on each other (vs. 10)
		5. Paul says, *accept* one another
		6. Both sides can hold their views to the glory of God: ***6****Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.*
	2. There are many such non-essential, personal conviction issues today:
		1. One church worships with organ and hymnal, another church uses band and contemporary worship songs.
		2. One believer has a glass of wine with dinner, another has a conviction not to touch alcohol.
		3. Doctrine: eschatology, pneumatology, reformed vs. arminianism, etc.
	3. Boundaries of acceptance: what we cannot accept:

Principle: *We accept diversity within the framework of the gospel, but we must* ***not*** *accept divergence from the gospel or damage to the gospel or our gospel witness.*

* + 1. Anything that diverges from or damages the gospel (Gal. 1:8-9)
		2. Soul damaging, relationship-killing, community-polluting sin
			1. Matt. 18 is essentially loving non-acceptance of sin
			2. *Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Gal. 6:1*
			3. Love vs. indifference
	1. Faithful adherence to the gospel of Jesus Christ is essential to our bond as a community because without the gospel there is no Christian community.
1. **The Basis of Mutual Acceptance**
	1. Over and over again Paul connects our acceptance of one another to God's acceptance of us through Christ.

*… for God has accepted them.****4****Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand…****10****You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.****11****It is written: “‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.’”* ***12****So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Rom. 14:3-4,10-12*

*Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. Rom. 15:7*

* 1. The basis (foundation) of our acceptance of one another is God's acceptance of us.
	2. God's acceptance of us is at the center of what Jesus came to accomplish.
		1. Judgment Day isn't primarily about where we will go, but about where we stand with God.
		2. Will I be accepted by God or rejected by God?
		3. Jesus said that on that Day many will hear him say the words, "Depart from Me, I never knew you".
		4. The greatest torment of hell is being separated from God our Creator.
	3. Jesus bore our sins and endured the (seeming) rejection of His Father that we deserved.
		1. *My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?* Ps. 22:1; Matt. 27:46
		2. God never really rejected His Son, in fact, at the very moment He was pouring out His righteous wrath over our sin upon Jesus, His heart was well pleased with His Son and fully accepted Jesus' atoning death as completely sufficient on our behalf.
		3. For those who trust in Christ, Judgment Day will not be a day of rejection, it will be a day of complete and total acceptance based on the finished work of Christ.
		4. *Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand,* ***for the Lord is able to make them stand****.* Vs. 4
	4. Accepting one another is like forgiving one another. It's not optional. Forgive as Christ forgave you. Accept one another as Christ accepted you.
1. **The Beauty of Mutual Acceptance**
	1. There is a deep beauty to the acceptance God has given us in Christ.
		1. God didn't assess who was beautiful enough to merit His love and acceptance.
		2. God demonstrated His love for us in this, while we were yet sinners - while our souls were yet ugly and deformed with sin - Christ died for us, in order that we might be qualified to be accepted.
	2. God accepted us as sons and daughters. God drew us into His family and seated us at His table as His beloved children. That is beautiful!
	3. Another beautiful picture of how deep God's acceptance of us goes: Jesus takes us as his bride.
		1. Jesus didn't find us beautiful and captivating and irresistible. He found us dirty and stained and defiled by sin, and he *"gave himself up for her [the church] to make her holy, cleansing her by washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."* Eph. 5:25-27
	4. The picture of adoption and of a bride speak of the kind of acceptance that treasures and prizes and loves with great tenderness. God doesn't reject you. God doesn't tolerate you. With all His heart He accepts you. We don't want to miss the beauty in God's acceptance of us in Christ.
	5. That beauty is reflected in the church as we mirror that acceptance on to another.
	6. Ugly churches: look down on other's differences, argue and quarrel over disputable matters, break fellowship and divide over non-essential issues, hold those with differences in contempt. This creates an ugly atmosphere that does not glorify the Lord.
	7. Revel in being accepted by Christ and bend that acceptance out towards other precious brothers and sisters.
	8. When we accept one another as Christ accepted us, it reflects the beauty of the gospel and Christ's outrageous acceptance of redeemed sinners.
	9. It brings praise and glory to God
	10. *Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. Rom. 15:7*