



Gifts from the Father: Acceptance

I. Our Heavenly Father has a father's heart. He knows what it is to see us as His children suffer, be disobedient, need discipline, and experience joy. He is the perfect example of parenthood.

1. God the Father audibly speaks three blessings into His Son's life. He does this twice, using the exact same phrase. In this blessing the Heavenly Father instructs us as to three needs every human has: Acceptance, Belonging, and Confidence. They are to be met first in Him, and second through our earthly families. If these needs are not met, we tend to seek their fulfillment elsewhere, even though often through personally destructive means.

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

—Matthew 3:17

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

—Matthew 17:5

2. These blessings gave honor and glory to the Son, Jesus, as He heard His heavenly Father speak of Him. We as earthly parents have the privilege, and the responsibility, to speak "honor and glory" into our children's lives.

For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

—2 Peter 1:17

II. We are called to be imitators of God as beloved children and follow His example in all things—including parenting.

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. —Ephesians 5:1–2

III. The power of acceptance and unconditional love:

1. For a toddler

2. For an elementary school-aged child

3. For an adolescent

4. For a teen

IV. When we do not give acceptance, who will?

End of Part 1

V. Acceptance and unconditional love are not to enable sinful behavior.

Lessons from the Forgiving Father

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."

—Luke 15:11–24

1. He did not chase after His son.

Our children need to learn to make their own choices.

2. He did not rescue His son.

He let His son "wallow in the trough" of his choices.

3. He allowed His son to "come to his senses."

Our children need to make the decision on their own to "turn around."

4. His son sensed his father would have him back.

Do our children believe in our unconditional love?

5. The Father was looking for His son to return.

Are we looking for our children to return?

6. He was waiting with outstretched arms.

Will our children be surprised by our acceptance and love?

Helpful Resources

How to Really Love Your Child, Ross Campbell.

Raising a Trailblazer, Virginia Friesen.

Parenting with Love and Logic, Foster W. Cline and Jim Fay.

Group Questions

1. How were acceptance and unconditional love shown or withheld in your family?
2. How have you been able to unconditionally love, but conditionally respond to sinful choices?
3. What strikes you most about the story of the Forgiving Father? What character did you most identify with?
4. What have you done with your children to help them know of your acceptance and unconditional love?

Questions for Couples

1. What are you doing well with your children to help them feel secure in your love?
2. What could you do to help them feel more accepted and loved?