

Accepting One Another

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Can you relate to this? You want people to recognize who you are as a unique individual. You want to be heard. You want to fit in and be liked. You want to be accepted. If you are like me in any way, you can relate. I would like to be heard and seen as the true person I am—the one God created. I want it to be OK that I am who I am. I want to be accepted.

I believe we are created with the desire to be accepted. When, as a child, the girl down the street doesn't want to play with us or we are picked last for the school team, we feel hurt. We say to ourselves, "Why don't they like me?" As adults we realize that if we are not accepted by others it's not necessarily that people don't like us—they may just not believe we're "a good fit" for them, whether individually or as part of a group.

So, I've said that I want to be accepted. I also have stated that I believe we, as humans, are created with this desire. If that is the case, that means that others want to be accepted as well. I ask myself, how many times have I myself not accepted someone? I would like to think I am fairly accepting of people, but I must admit that is not always the case.

I dig deeper and ask myself, "When I have not been accepting of someone, why is that in general? Why would I not want to hang out with a person?" If I really look closely and am honest with myself, by and large it is because the person is not like me. In other words, we don't have similar personalities, we don't communicate in the same way, and/or we don't have similar interests.

It's true that we tend to gravitate towards people who are similar to ourselves. For one thing, we feel like certain people "get" us. One way to put it is that they don't think we're a freak! So, we tend to hang out with people who are similar to us. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that, but I am wondering how much we're missing out on if we are not around people who are a bit different from ourselves.

I think back on my life to a few people who are now my friends whom I honestly couldn't stand to be around at first. I enjoy a challenge so I made it my mission to get closer to each person to see what made him or her tick. What I often found is that they saw the world differently than I did and that's why I felt uncomfortable. I've learned that some of my biggest periods of growth in my life were when I added people who are different than me into my life. I find that they tend to stretch me. Since I can be cautious at times, I need people in my life who encourage me to go outside my comfort zone. That may mean grabbing me by the hand and saying, "Come on, Jen—let's go!" They help to push me forward.

If we can come to accept people just the way they are, we can learn from each other, grow together, and balance each other out. We need different types of people in our lives — those who are similar to us, and those people we sometimes just can't figure out at times. We will not always agree with each other, but that doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you or me.

Let's embrace the diversity of our personalities. You're fine just the way you are. You're not a freak!