

## Seeking Acceptance

Text : **Mathew 10: 28-39**

### INTRODUCTION :

#### A. Did you ever become so used to something that you didn't notice it any more ?

1. My son lived by the interstate highway. He totally tuned out the traffic noise.
2. With difficulty I learned to sleep with the noise of a fan. Now I need it to sleep.

#### B. Seeking approval from others is like this. ( **It's there, but we don't notice it.** )

1. Everyone seeks to be accepted by someone. ( *seeks their approval* )
2. In fact, peer acceptance is the strongest drive in the life of a teenager.
  - a. Stronger than the desire to eat or sleep.
  - b. Stronger than moral values.
3. We never completely outgrow it. Whose approval / acceptance do you seek ?
  - a. It's normal and right to want the approval of one's parents.
    - \* *Years later, many parents begin seeking the approval of their teenagers.*
  - b. Good students seek to please their teachers.
  - c. Athletes endure pain to please their coach.
  - d. Employees try to please their employers.
  - e. Neighbors ... Maintain lawn, etc
  - f. Friends ... especially one's boyfriend or girlfriend
  - g. Spouse ( *Remember the influence Solomon's wives had on him.* )

#### C. Though it's normal to seek the approval of others, it's also problematic.

1. The desire to please or to be accepted often leads to bad decisions.
  - ILL-** **Man I knew worked in the family business for years, until his father died. He immediately left the business after his father passed. He hated the business every day he was there, but wanted to please dad.**
2. This instinctive desire for acceptance is why the Lord's Apostle warned us :
  - "Bad company corrupts good morals." I Cor. 15:33**
3. People seldom get in trouble alone. ( **while seeking acceptance of a group** )
  - ILL.-** *Even a good dog will kill sheep when running with a pack.*
    - a. People also change in the pack. The group will do things none will do alone.
      - 1) Vandalism ( **Group often manipulates most insecure or youngest member** )
      - 2) Injury or cruelty to others
    - b. I've never known anyone who smoked his first cigarette alone. ( **other vices** )

**D. Acceptance is a trap that ensnares even good people. ( Peter ... Gal. 2 ... Barnabas )**

1. Loving parents sometimes make bad decisions because they fear rejection by their teenagers. ( **Be a parent ... not a friend.** )
2. Fear of rejection causes people **not** to speak up to oppose evil. ( **Nicodemus John 3** )
  - a. “*They may think I’m a religious fanatic.*”
  - b. “*Maybe they won’t be my friends any more.*”
    - 1) A true friend will not reject you because of your beliefs.
    - 2) Anyone who pressures you to compromise your beliefs is NOT your friend.

**THESIS :**

**The Christian may not turn the keys of his life over to anyone except God.**

**I. Seeking the approval of any person can be dangerous.**

Radio commentator, Dave Ramsey says, “*We buy things with money we don’t have to please people we don’t really like.*”

**A. Seeking acceptance from others turns control of your life over to someone else.**

1. It is never good to allow another person to control your life. ( **God owns us.** )
  - a. No man is consistently good.
  - b. **ILL.-** **Many a young girl has ended up compromised or even pregnant because she feared rejection by her boyfriend.**  
**Countless young men have ended up in jail by going along with the “Alfa-male” or seeking to prove himself to a group. ( gang )**
2. Everyone will stand before God and do it as an individual.
  - a. “*But, they made me do it.*” NO EXCUSES. ( **cf- 1 talent** )
  - b. Adam tried to blame his wife, but his excuse was refused. ( **paradise lost** )
3. **Always BEWARE ...** It’s easy to be ensnared by one you want to impress.
  - a. **Prov. 29: 25- The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted.**
  - b. A snare is an unexpected trap which catches the prey before he sees it.
  - c. The desire to please men can ensnare a Christian before he realizes he’s trapped.

\* *The Pharisees were so consumed with impressing each other, they forgot God.*

**B. Christians must never allow themselves to be pressured to seek the approval of anyone other than God.**

1. Seeking acceptance is a behavior that's hardwired into their flesh. ( **Herd instinct** )
  - a. No one is born mature : **"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child"** **Prov 22:15**
  - b. Young people do seek acceptance because it comes naturally.
  - c. HOWEVER .. learning to master the flesh is part of the maturation process.
2. We live in a culture. Cultures survive by applying pressure for everyone to conform.
  - a. Culture is from man ... not God. ( **Phil. 3:20** **".. our citizenship is in heaven"** )
  - b. In almost all cultures on earth, the majority of people are not God-fearing.
  - c. Our American culture actively pressures Christians to accept ungodliness.
- \* 3. **Consider the culture of Sodom; it surely did not start off so very wicked.**

**C. The Christian must prioritize God's approval above all others. ( *key to joy* )**

1. **Prov. 3: 5-7** Trust in the Lord with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. ( *seek God's acceptance* )
2. The fear of man also robs the Christian of his joy. ( Compare ... **Prov. 5: 10** )
  - a. When happiness depends upon peer acceptance, it's never secure.
  - b. When one compromises to gain acceptance, he knows he is not truly accepted.
  - c. **"If I do ( or say ) that they won't like me any more."**
3. When one is forced to choose between pleasing God and people he cares about, he'll never be happy with his decision, and will resent those who forced the decision.
- \* **A Christian must do right regardless of who applies pressure. ( *courage* )**

**D. Four questions to ask yourself before allowing anyone to influence your life.**

1. Could seeking this person's approval potentially become a snare ?  
**"The fear of \_\_\_ ? Name ? \_\_\_ brings a snare"** ( **Prov. 29: 25** )
2. Is this person worthy of having control of my life ?
3. Who really controls outcomes ? ( *Is it God or man ?* )
  - a. **Many go through life greasing the squeaky wheel. BUT** God doesn't squeak.
  - b. **God is not visible so we often don't think about the affects which our decisions have on Him or our relationship with Him.**
4. In the long run, is it more important to please this person than to please God ?

## II. Maintaining a relationship with God requires the courage to put Him first.

### A. We choose who will influence us based upon our relationship with them.

1. Those we love or whom we desire to love us influence us most. ( **Who loves us?** )
2. Those we perceive to have power over us influence us greatly. ( **Who has power?** )

### B. God loves you and He wants to be the one in your life who influences you most.

1. He proved His desire to be in your life by enduring the cross for you.
  - a. The logical response to such great love is to love in return.
  - b. **I John 4: 19- We love, because He first loved us.**
2. The sacrifice of Jesus makes it abundantly clear that He will not easily reject us.
  - a. We can be comfortable and secure in our relationship with God.
  - b. Notice the previous verse :
 

**I John 4: 18- There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. ( We don't fear God's rejection. )**

### C. As our ruler (Lord) God requires that He be the only guiding influence in our lives.

1. **Text ... Matt. 10: 34-37** We must make a clear choice for God. ( **result = conflict** )
  - a. The Christian must anticipate a negative response from some.
  - b. The most negative pressure often comes from those with whom we are close.
  - c. Our eternal destiny depends on our willingness to resist their pressure.
2. The Apostles took up the teaching of our Lord. ( **Social pressure is expected.** )
 

**I Pet. 3:14-15** But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, **15** but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, ...
3. We cannot allow the world to pressure us into conformity to their standard.
  - a. **Text ... Matt. 10:32-33 , 39** Confess Christ even to the point of death.
  - b. **I Pet. 3: 6-** just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children **if** you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. ( *Must not be intimidated into silence* )

\* **Have the courage to resist social pressure, to please God above all.**

### III. This is one of the most significant problems Christians face.

#### A. Few overtly decide “*I don’t want to be like God.*”

1. By nature we are influenced by the world around us. ( **buffet our body .. I Cor. 9** )
2. Like the traffic noise along the freeway, the world’s influence is always there.
3. It has the potential to destroy our relationship with God without our noticing it.

#### B. The Christian must consciously and constantly resist the world’s influence.

1. In life we seldom think about not allowing non-Christians to affect our values.
  - a. The Lord’s Apostle warned us :  
**Rom. 12:2-** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is ..
  - b. Why would Paul give us such a warning ? **Nature takes us the wrong way!**
  - c. Why did Israel want a king ? ( **Why did God order all inhabitants expelled ?** )  
**I Sam. 8:5 - Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.**  
 ( **Like America ... Their social values had pushed against the will of God.** )
2. The fact that we seldom think about it is what makes it so very dangerous.

#### C. We must make an active decision not to allow the world to influence us. (*Vaccinate*)

1. When two people you know are enemies, you cannot be allies with both.
  - a. One cannot maintain a relationship with the world and God at the same time.  
**James 4:4-** You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
  - b. God views a friendly relationship with the world as unfaithfulness to him. (*adultery*)
  - c. **ILL. -** Can you imagine your response if your spouse maintained a relationship with his previous girlfriend ? ( **one day each week for her** )
2. We must not allow ourselves to become enamored with the things of this world.
  - a. **I John 2:15 - Do not love the world nor the things in the world.**  
**If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**
  - b. Everyone must make a choice. We can’t have our cake and eat it too.
  - c. Do I want what this world has to offer **or** do I want the splendor of Heaven.
3. One of the characteristics of maturity is the ability to postpone gratification.
  - a. It’s hard to resist when we see others around us enjoying all Satan has to offer.
  - b. Heaven is fantastic, but every day I can see my neighbor’s new boat and ...  
 ( *We enslave ourselves to the world by debt.* )

#### IV. How do we resist being drawn away by the world and by those in it.

##### A. Once we have made a decision for Christ and set that as our goal in life.

1. Keep your eyes focused on the goal of Heaven.

**Col. 3:1-2** Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

2. Don't second guess your decision.

**Luke 9: 62-** But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

##### B. Spend time with people who share your Christian values.

1. "*Birds of a feather flock together.*"

2. **Don't flock with strange birds.** Eliminate influences that don't share your values.

##### C. Become immersed in your new culture. (*Learn all there is to know about it.*)

1. Some foreigners try to maintain their old culture after immigrating.

2. Heaven has its own distinctive culture and the Christian must adapt to it.

3. That culture is communicated to us in the bible.

4. **For thousands of years the Jews have been able to maintain their cultural identity in every major city in the world and so can we. To do so, we must maintain a sense of community, not just assemble.**

#### CONCLUSION :

A. The church is God's kingdom on the earth.

B. It will be translated to Heaven.

C. The church is where we learn to live in Heaven.

D. Are you a part of God's kingdom ? Of His church ?

#### INVITATION :

God is inviting you to choose Him,  
to reject the world's system, and  
to receive citizenship in His kingdom.