

International Conversation Café

Is Faith Relevant to My Life?

Human Need: Love and Acceptance

Motivational speaker, Tony Robbins, identifies six emotional needs every person has. The way we meet these needs can either be helpful or destructive to ourselves and those around us. This discussion examines how God's love makes a profound difference in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

All of us need to know that we are loved and accepted by others, that we belong. Parents and grandparents are usually the first to demonstrate unconditional love, appreciation, and acceptance as we are growing up. However, throughout our lives, we continue to need a community of people who love us.

Because we need to be loved, we either look for it in healthy ways or unhealthy ways.

What are some destructive choices people made to find acceptance and belonging?

What are some constructive ways to find acceptance?

God loves people deeply and seeks a relationship with us. He provides the ultimate experience of love, acceptance, and belonging. He does this for anyone who turns to him.

Assign parts and read the following story.

Narrator: Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man named Zacchaeus lived there. He was a chief tax collector and was very rich. Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was. But he was a short man. He could not see Jesus because of the crowd. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree. He wanted to see Jesus, who was coming that way. Jesus reached the spot where Zacchaeus was. He looked up and said,

Jesus: "Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay at your house today."

Narrator: So, Zacchaeus came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this. They began to whisper among themselves.

The Crowd: "Jesus has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

Narrator: But Zacchaeus stood up.

Zacchaeus: "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of what I own to those who are poor. And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay it back. I will pay back four times the amount I took."

Jesus to Zacchaeus: "Today salvation has come to your house. You are a member of Abraham's family line. The Son of Man came to look for the lost and save them."

Retell the story in your own words.

It is important to understand that a tax collector was a person the Jews hated. They called tax collectors, “sinners.” Why? People considered tax collectors a traitor to their own people, the Jews, because they worked for the Romans who ruled over them. Secondly, tax collectors had a reputation for getting rich by cheating people.

In what way did Jesus demonstrate love to Zacchaeus?

What effect did Jesus’ love have upon Zacchaeus?

Can you think of an experience when someone was kind to you and it gave you the motivation and example to pass the kindness on to someone else?

Most people recognize that “bad” people, like Zacchaeus, need God. But the Bible teaches that all people need to know God's love and forgiveness. Why? Because no one is without sin. There is no one who loves God and people perfectly. Deep down, we all know there are parts of us we are ashamed of, whether it is our thoughts or actions that demonstrate hostility towards people or God. For that reason, all of us need to come to God for forgiveness and acceptance, even people that seem to be quite good.

Do you agree or disagree with this thought? Explain.

The amazing thing is that God loves everyone, whether or not we consider a person worthy or unworthy. Through the example of Zacchaeus, we see that God’s love and kindness towards people changes us. In summary, consider what John wrote in 1 John 4.

9 Here is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only Son into the world. He sent him so we could receive life through him. **10** Here is what love is. It is not that we loved God. It is that he loved us and sent his Son to give his life to pay for our sins. **11** Dear friends, since God loved us this much, we should also love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God. But if we love one another, God lives in us. His love is made complete in us.

Explain what John is saying in your own words.

How could God’s love change your attitudes toward God?

How could God’s love change your attitudes towards people?

Final Thought

For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us. ~Psalm 103: 11,12