

Di121 Effective Communication

Lesson Di121-18 Attitude: Acceptance

How many different kinds of birds does your country have? The answer is probably hundreds! The Bible says that God knows and feeds each one, even though we often consider them small and unimportant. If God views birds this way and cares for them, shouldn't we care for people—who are of much greater value? Since human beings are created in God's image, shouldn't we accept them like God has accepted them?

The next five lessons will consider another aspect of effective communication. They will discuss the attitudes that believers need to speak effectively. These feelings of the heart are important whether you talk with the lost, with those seeking truth, or with fellow disciples. This first lesson looks at the way Jesus modeled the attitude of acceptance.

The word “acceptance” means to receive someone in a positive and kind way. It means loving people no matter what their situation or where they came from. Jesus never turned away anyone who earnestly sought after him. He ate with prostitutes, tax collectors, and other outcasts of his day. He accepted all people as important, regardless of their past. He accepted the sick, the religious, the foreigner, and even his enemies. He welcomed women and children, rich and poor, ruler and beggar.

Every society has groups of people that reject—even hate—other groups in their society. In Jesus' day this was true as well. Jesus invited the outcast, the hated, and the sinful to be a part of God's kingdom. This included foreigners, who spoke strange languages and had peculiar habits, even those with deadly diseases.

The Gospel of Luke tells two stories that illustrate the exact situation just described. First, while Jesus was in one of the towns of Galilee, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed (Luke 5:12-13).

The question of the man with leprosy was important. He was asking if Jesus would accept him in his present condition. Leprosy was a terrible disease and could easily spread through physical contact. The Law of Moses kept lepers from entering the temple. Touching such an unclean person brought defilement to the “clean” person. People afflicted with this skin disease could not live with normal people. They had to live in groups by themselves, often outside the city. In this case, Jesus touched the leper. A leper usually could not experience human touch because of others' fears. Jesus confirmed his acceptance and compassion by his words, “I am willing, be clean.” Yes, it was God's will that he be cleansed completely and accepted by Jesus. Christ cared more about the person's need than the rules of clean and unclean.

A second story in Luke is similar. On another occasion Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee on his way to Jerusalem. As he was going into a village, ten men with leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan (Luke 17:11-16).

In this case the lepers called out to Jesus, keeping the accepted distance away. They asked for acceptance, by asking for his mercy. They called Jesus “Master,” indicating their faith in him. Based on their faith in Jesus, he accepted them and answered their great need. In this case the healings were not instant. The law instructed those cured of this disease to show themselves to a priest to confirm the healing. This is why Jesus sent them to the priests. They could have demanded that Jesus touch them and heal them immediately. They had no assurance that he had even healed them. No proof! Why show myself to the priest if I am still a leper?

But as they went anyway, as they were obedient, they were all healed! Jesus made special mention of the one who returned to thank him. He was a Samaritan, a foreigner. The Samaritan realized that he had been accepted in two ways—not just as a leper, but as a non-Jew. This acceptance was because of his faith. It seems he may have received salvation in addition to the physical healing all ten had received. He was the only one who returned to thank him!

Jesus accepted everyone. The one requirement was to call on him and believe. This agrees with an ancient prophecy from Isaiah. As the prophet described God’s coming kingdom, he said that eunuchs and foreigners would be included in it. Even though some may not be Jews by birth, they still can be part of God’s people. In the past such people were excluded, but under the Messiah’s rule, they are no longer excluded. They are now accepted by God. This same Isaiah passage contains the words that Jesus used concerning foreigners in the temple. He quoted, “For my house will be a house of prayer for all nations” (Luke 19:46).

The point of this lesson should be clear. Followers of Christ need to offer acceptance to the lost in the same way Jesus did during his life on earth. God’s acceptance is not based on a person’s origin, health, or other conditions. God offers life to all. People have the choice to accept or reject it.

These stories are **important** because they illustrate that we, as Christians, need to accept and invite all people to come to Jesus. Jesus had no restrictions on who could become his disciples and neither should we.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God accepts all who come to him. His acceptance is based on nothing except their faith in Jesus.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. What is the meaning of the word “acceptance” used in this lesson? [Pause]

A. If you said, “The word “acceptance” means to receive someone in a positive, kind way, no matter their situation or place of origin,” you are correct.

2. What was the response of Jesus to the one leper who came to him for cleansing? [Pause]

A. If you said that Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man and healed him, you answered correctly.

3. What words did Jesus use about the temple to confirm that all people would be welcomed into his kingdom? [Pause]

A. If you answered that Jesus said, “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations,” you are correct.

4. How did the ten lepers demonstrate their faith after Jesus spoke to them from a distance? [Pause.]

A. If you said that they went to obey his instructions, even though as yet they had no proof of their healing, you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to memorize the two stories about lepers and tell them to someone who has not heard them before. Then ask this question, “What groups of people might not be accepted into the churches in your region?” Discuss what could be done to change this attitude of rejection among the believers?