

**October 1, 2017**  
**SOMA: Accept One Another**  
**Romans 15:7**

**Speaker 1:** your mind. We don't have to go through with it. It could leave my hair like it is, it's okay. Do you want to change your mind? No. I thought I was teaching you guys about grace and how to be gracious [laughs]. All right, it's kind of a good time. All right we're on [sermon?] of the body of Christ. We're on it because of two things that Jesus said about the body of Christ and about the Church. In John 17 he said, "In them you in me, so that they maybe brought to complete unity" talking about us, "then the world would know that you sent me and have love them even as you have loved me."

And then in John 13 he said, "your love," meaning our love together, "will prove to the world that you are my disciples." What's surprising about these two statements about the Church is we will reach the world in even the most ardent, cynic and critic, not through what we say but through what we do; the quality of our relationships with one another, how we treat one another.

Basically what Jesus is saying is when people see a diverse group of people coming together in Jesus' name and loving each other, loving and doing in life together, they will believe our message. And the message is, Jesus loves them and came to give his life for them, and even the worst of critic will come to know him. Which is why we're focusing then on, what does that look like? What does it mean to be the body of Christ? What kind of authentic fellowship? What are the characteristics of this authentic fellowship that will be reflective of Jesus?

And so far, we have looked at two things. One, just taking the word body of Christ and what does it mean? It simply simply means if the original body of Christ did this and believed this, then since we're a pattern after him, the current body of Christ to us will do the things that Jesus did and believe the things that Jesus believed. It's as simple as WWJD, what would Jesus do. It's as simple as simply letting Jesus live through us.

And Jesus did that very thing, it's says in John 1, "The word became flesh," and as a result people saw God's glory. We need to be the word made flesh to each other and to the world so that people may see God's glory and believe. So that's the first thing. And the second thing is we need to love one another. Love is the hallmark of the Church, it is our brand. The cross defines what love is and we looked at last week about what does it mean to love as Jesus loved us. And it means a lot of positive things.

We focus on the positive things like just being there for each other, hanging out, serving in Jesus' name, it involves practically ministry, helping those with financial aid and who are stressed out financially, providing food to the hungry, mourn at those who mourn, celebrate with those who celebrate and we did that with a baby shower celebrating Elliot and Bethany coming birth to their child.

It just means doing life together and being disciples who make disciples of each other. But it also means, and we didn't talk about this very much, so I want just hang on the positive things, but it also means getting rid of some things as well. Getting rid of some actions and attitudes that are unloving like, things like-- The scriptures says take off the old person, put on the new. That's part of loving each other, so getting rid of things like texting when you should be listening. You find that annoying when someone, when you're having a conversation with someone's texting, looking at the phone or they're looking over your shoulder for whatever reason not really focusing on you.

Or things like, disrespecting another person's viewpoint or thinking that your view is superior to theirs, or passive aggressiveness; talking about someone rather than talking to someone, which scriptures calls malice or criticizing people behind their back or raking them over the coals publicly rather than having conversation privately, or nitpicking, or harsh criticism, or divisiveness, or being argumentative and all these kind of stuff. All that stuff is really a turn off when people encounter in God's people. Not only do we take some things on, we also need to get rid of things that are either unloving words or unloving actions.

Today we're looking at acceptance, accepting one another. Love is the hallmark of the faith, it is what caused Jesus to come to earth and give his life for us. It is singled out by Jesus in John 13, as the quality that will reach people most effectively. But acceptance is where everything begins. We enter into the Christian faith in relation to the ministry of Jesus, we enter a relationship with him through his acceptance. And we also enter into the Church through acceptance.

So what is it? And this is incredibly important, this is how our relationship with God begins and also how our relationship with each other also begins; it begins with acceptance. So what is it and what are the implications of it? Now it's a singular verse, but there are hundreds of applications. If you think this out, it spins off in hundreds of ways, I'm not going to cover all hundred, don't worry, I'm only going to do 99, just 99 that's right.

Everyone's in fear, "Oh, no, another long one." But there are a lot of uses and definitions for acceptance. But Jesus makes it crystal clear through a simple simile and we're going to look at it. Let's pray, Heavenly father and now open our hearts and minds as to what you have to say to us in what is Biblical acceptance and show us not only what it means but how it applies, both in our lives and at the Church. We ask this in Jesus' name, **[unintelligible 00:05:45]**.

All right. So what is acceptance? Here's the phrase, "accept one another then, just as Christ accepted you." So it's a simple phrase. Accept one another just as Christ accepted you. So what does it mean? Let's break it down, accept one another. Now there are a lot common uses today as to acceptance. One is acceptance based on conformity to me or to my Church. It goes kind of like this, every Church says this, "We accept everyone here. We are a friendly Church."

There's not a single Church I've ever seen who says, "We're unfriendly and you're not welcoming." No, every Church says, "we are a welcoming Church, we are a friendly Church." But you have visited Churches, are all Churches friendly? Are all

Churches welcoming or accepting? Often times when we say everyone's accepted here, there is a condition in the back of our mind or in our action and behavior and the condition is, you are welcome here as long as you like who we are, what we do and how we do it.

So as long as you don't rock the boat, everything's good. If you appreciate what we offer and how we offer it, great and you know what if you don't appreciate it, well there's a lot of Churches, maybe this isn't the right place for you. And have you ever experienced that, and is that really welcoming? Is that really accepting? And there's another use that's common in our culture; it's a growing in popularity, it's the new definition of tolerance in some segments of our culture, it comes from the progressive side and it's a sense that, hey, acceptance is you have to agree with me. If you're going to accept me, you have to agree with me.

You definitely can't say what I'm doing or how I identify myself is wrong. If you disagree with my views or my lifestyle, then you're rejecting me. And you aren't really accepting me. And you hear this view point in the kind of Global Warming debate on the **[unintelligible 00:07:56]** marriage, same sex issues, transgender issues. And the problem with it is one, is highly intolerant and extremely close minded. Secondly, it shows no respect for the views of others. In fact, they're doing the very thing that they accuse others of; they're rejecting other people's points of view and not really hearing them out or accepting what other people's points of views.

So they're making the same mistake as they're saying others are making towards them. And it leaves no room for growth. I mean all of us, I have lived long enough that you know there are some things you believed earlier that you no longer believe now, and there are some things you do, you did in the past that you don't do any longer, because you know they're not good for you.

For instance, I grew up in Western Pennsylvania. And in Western Pennsylvania, the diet was this: meat, potatoes, gravy over everything in a large piece of white bread with margarine. And that is the Western Pennsylvania diet and that's it. I don't think I saw a green vegetable until I went to college. I don't think I ever had a salad, literally, until I was in college. Now was meat, potatoes and a piece of white bread consistent with the food triangle, or whatever it is the cone, or whatever it is today?

No, it's way out of luck, it's horrible diet, that's why there's a lot of heart disease in Western Pennsylvania, it's not good for you. And there were some things I did, that's how I ate. I changed because I know that's not good for me. So that viewpoint doesn't allow for growth. We all change because we realize we believe things differently and we live differently because we learn some things.

The other view of acceptance is, it comes from the conservative side or the religious side, there's acceptance based on external religion. It's basically this, you are accepted at a Church if you kind of fit in. If you fit in with a dress, if you fit in the culture, if you're relatively cleaned up at least on the outside, you look like a Christian, you smile like a Christian, there aren't any obvious sins in your life. If there are some obvious sins you hide them really well. If you can play the part, look the part, you kind of fit in, in general.

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You look basically cleaned up, you don't have piercings and tattoos kind of rough like you came from a trailer park or something like that. If you basically look like us, then you're fine, we're comfortable with you. The basic expectation is if you clean up your act, before you come to know Jesus, or before you try to enter the Church, then you are accepted. But again, is that acceptance? If you've seen the TV Show *Friends*, there is a scene where Ross is having a hard time but Ross never shows he's having a hard time. He always says, "Ross is fine".

Most Christians come to Church with that same kind of view or we put that on each other. If you come to Church you have to have that Christian smile. "Richard is fine". That's acceptance based on this kind of external religion, Jesus is really hard on external religion. That's what the Pharisees were into. Here's what he said, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and self-indulgence".

If that's not acceptance so then what is? In fact, that form of acceptance really turned me off in the Church because I remember distinctly, I'm in Church, it's Presbyterian Church, this part of the pews, really quiet, no one said anything. People came in, they left. As they went the door, they were smoking, there's a cloud of smoke, I don't know what the Presbyterians and cigarettes but anyway.

But in the choir there was a guy named Mr. Golf. He is just singing and then he's smiling like an angel, but he is the meanest teacher in the school, literally. I remember he was **[unintelligible 00:12:00]** and live in front of everyone in the class. The student responded and it was a little sarcastic, he said, "Jeez, he lightened up", and he just lost his temper. He got red in the face, he pounded the desk, "Don't you take the Lord's name in vain", and he just threw them out, ream them out in front of everyone. I thought, "Wow, so he's singing like an angel in the Church, but he has horrible temper and just chewing a student out in front of everyone," it was an absolute turn off.

External religion, but here internally he has all kinds of rage issues and it's a real turn off. What is Biblical acceptance then? Biblical acceptance is, Jesus adds this phrase in order to make it really clear, it is "Just as Christ accepted you". Just as Christ accepted you, what does that call you back to? It calls you back to your salvation experience. Whether you became a Christian dramatically, like you heard of the gospel and you fell in love with Jesus, it was love at first sight, or you came to faith slowly, he kind of wooed you, you grew in love, doesn't matter how you kept the faith, you know there were a point in time where you made the faith your own.

And Jesus asks you, remember that moment. Now, how did you experience my acceptance?" What were the conditions or qualifications that Jesus put on you in order for Him to accept you? Did he ask you your age? I want you to respond yes or no? Did he ask you your age? All right, did he ask you what your gender was? Okay, ethnicity? Income or economic status? Did you had the file with the IRS? First, confidential disclosure forms. Marital status? Language? Education? Biblical IQ? Wait a minute, no doctrine, no purity test? What? What if you're a New Ager? No. Abilities? Physical appearance? All right, spiritual condition? Were you in a good place when you came to know Jesus?

Actually look at the New Testament, no one was in good place, that's why they came to Jesus, they were in a bad place. They were all a mess, that's how we all come in to know Jesus. Because we know we needed Him. How about moral condition? Do you have to make any changes in your life before Jesus accepts you? Thinking of everyone in the New Testament, Jesus, who came to know Jesus, did Jesus say, "Okay, first you need to change this. And then you can come to know me"?

No. Not one condition. Jesus accepts us as we are. The question is, does our acceptance then reflect the acceptance of Jesus? How about an area of age? I've heard this in Churches, not Journey but in general, I've heard Churches say, "You can be too young to come to know Jesus because you don't know what you're doing", or, "You can be too old, because all you're doing is try to buy fire insurance", especially if you are a criminal or a con. All late life conversions aren't really authentic because they're just getting fire insurance.

Or with gender, I've seen Churches where I think they're accepting as members male or female, didn't matter, but in leadership, just because you have a certain chromosome, you may not seem as a leader or you can't lead in certain places. Or ethnicity, is ethnicity a condition for Church membership? Then why are Churches so segregated today? Why is the Church the most segregated institution in our country? Think about this.

Do we really model acceptance that Jesus model for us? Did our experience with him, model what we do, our income and economic status? Why is it that the hardest groups to bring together are white collar and blue collar? I've never seen a mixed Church between white collar and blue collar. They are always divided. Of all the areas we're divided in, it's the area of economic status. Or marital status; why is it if 55% of our culture, 55% are single, why isn't the Church made out of 55% of single people then? If we really are accepting as Jesus accepts us, you would expect a 55% of our community, if they are single, you'd expect the Church to mirror that.

How about Biblical IQ? Wow, is there some expectations. Are you comfortable? People, if they come to faith in Jesus, they bring all kinds of stuff with them right? I've seen all kinds of people; new agers, people believe in karma, don't believe in a resurrection, or all kinds of other beliefs, are you comfortable with that? A lot of Churches aren't comfortable with that. If you're too far out you say, "I'm not sure, maybe you need to fix your doctrine up before we can feel comfortable with you."

Or physical appearance. Now, I don't think physical appearance is an issue in Southern California. The grandeur the better you are. But in the East Coast, dress is important, image matters on the East Coast, trust me. And then spiritual and moral condition. I had the sense that the Church really expects most people to come in as spiritual thirty-year-olds. When most people come to faith, they are spiritual infants. They come with all kinds of habits and hang-ups, and varying attitudes that aren't reflective of our culture. I find the Church tends to be very hypocritically in this area.

We expect new believers to come in almost acting like believers when they just became believers, we kind of want them to act mature, or at least not have certain sins in their life.

And I find Churches have interesting signature sins. I'll give an example of this, I was talking to somebody, and I've seen this before as well, that is, "You are accepted in this particular Church as long as you didn't drink." But if they caught you drinking, they clearly would look down on you, "You're not really"--As a result, if they get caught, they hide it at the restaurant or they lie about it.

You're not really a Christian, you don't really fit in here if you drink. But, the same Churches noted that a lot of people are way overweight. And they wear the Muumuus and stuff. It's kind of funny, here it is, it is unacceptable, and you don't quite fit in if you drink, but it's quite acceptable for you to be a glutton. Or if you were to eat excessively way beyond what you need to, which is interesting because Scripture says gluttony is clearly a sin, but drinking in moderation is not. So you could be accepted as long as you don't do something which Scripture permits and do something that Scripture is against. That's how I find it kind of interesting.

But every Church has these signature sins where the Church culture says, "Believes this, you fit in if you've act this way and do this this way", whether Scripture says it or not. We can have signature sins as well. I think the struggles in the '60s and '70s was the issue of how do we handle divorced people? Because in the '60s and '70s, if you got divorced as a Christian, it was an automatic way to the door. You are clearly shunned, people are lumped in-- all divorced people, if you are divorced, clearly it was your fault, they've lumped them all in together as a-- in reality, it's not everyone who is divorced wanted a divorce. Which is in my case, I didn't want it. I believe in marriage, I don't believe in divorce. I didn't want it, I didn't choose it.

There a lot of divorced people who are like that in the '60s and the '70s. But in the '60s and the '70s, the Church didn't know how to handle it. As a result, you had this feeling of not being belonging and most divorced people exited the Church at that time. A lot of them never entered it because they felt as though they were so sinful, what they did was so unredeemable they could never find their way back.

Now, in the 70's and 80's we settled this issue and we realized we were way too harsh to divorced people. Divorce is not the most irredeemable sin. It took a long time struggling, how do we accept divorced people into the Church? We have a new issue where I think we're making the same mistake with the same group as we made with divorced people in the '60s and '70s, and it's in the area of same sex relationships and transgender issues. How does the Church deal with these huge moral issues? What is accepting versus what is it condoning? How do we not create an atmosphere where anything goes in the Church and at the same time, demonstrate the radical acceptance of Jesus.

I think the answer to that is captured in this phrase. It produces incredible light on this issue, "As Christ has accepted you." On what basis did Christ accept you? When we look John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." On what basis does Jesus accept us? It's on the basis of faith. It's how we enter into the faith. It's how we enter into the family.

There is no other requirements, no other pre-conditions. What it says then, if people come to know Jesus and they enter into the Church, we need to accept them just as

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they are with all their current beliefs, dysfunctions, hurts, habits, lifestyles, sexual orientations, sexual practices. I mean we already do it for heterosexuals, don't we? How many of you are still struggling with sexual issues? How many of you are still after-- How long have you been a believer now? How long have you been in the Church? How many of you still struggle with heterosexual sins in your life?

Yet, you're asking transgender and same sex, those who are attracted or struggle with that, to automatically change before they enter the Church or as soon as they enter the Church and you have not. Can you see the hypocrisy of it? Also, it doesn't reflect the acceptance of Jesus because if you accepted just as Jesus did, it means when you're initially cut into the Church, you accept them with all their struggles, all their baggage.

Again, Ephesians, "for it is by grace you have been saved through faith and is not from yourselves, it is a gift from God not of works so that no one can boast." Not of works, not a single work. Not a single lifestyle change yet. When you come to faith in Jesus, when you initially enter the Church, it's Jesus plus nothing. The Christian life is on the other side of the salvation equation. It's not Jesus plus the Christian life equals salvation someday and I get to go to heaven, but it's Jesus, faith in Him, that's salvation and it leads to that a response and then that we begin to live for him.

First then, when you become a Christian or someone joins a Church for the first time or enters the Church for the first time, it is by faith and as Jesus welcomes us so we are called to welcome then. And only then do we begin to or only then do we expect people to start living like a believer. Jesus says this, it's interesting. His basic appeal to most people was this, "Come and follow me." Now, come, what does it say? Come if you have your act together. Come if you have some basic doctrine down. Come if, whatever, if you don't have any issues. No it's come, that's the gracious offer. It's something we simply have to respond to. No conditions.

Then he says, "Follow me." I think everyone expects this. There is a reason why people come to know Jesus, Reason why they come to know Jesus is because they discover things in life that they're just not happy about and they are looking to him for answers. I think everyone intuitively knows that when you come to Jesus, you're going to change. He is going to change your life. You invited him into your life in order to make some changes because you come to him for whatever reason, emptiness or loneliness. But you come to him for a reason that you want to change in your life.

I think there's an expectation of it. Ephesians 2 ends with, "for we are God's handy work." We are God's handy work, we're God's project. We come to faith of Him. Now we're in His hands and He begins to mold us, and to shape us. He molds our beliefs, he molds our behaviors and every area. This is the struggle of the Christian faith and that is when we come to know him, we begin to grow in our faith, we'll hit areas where we disagree with our faith.

Yet the challenge is to bring our lives into conformity with our faith. There are things you won't figure things out. There are things that will feel like they are regressive or bigoted. That's just the struggle, it's learning to live under God's leadership. Or I like

to see it as simply the process the Christian faith is simply learning to live according to God's design.

This is really important, I've used this illustration before, this is a hand mixer, it's designed for certain things. It's great for making cupcakes and cakes and all kinds of yummy stuff. What good is it? Does it mix cement well? No. Why? It wasn't designed for it. If you try to mix cement with this, you'll just burn it out and just ruin the whole thing. Great for making cakes though.

If you will use a mixer according to it's design, it works just perfectly. If you don't, you just burn it out, ruin it, destroy it. Same thing is true about the Christian life. The Christian life is simply living according to God's design. If you live within that design, man, things go phenomenal. It's cupcakes and cake. If you don't, man, you're going to burn yourself out. You're ruin-- You bring all kinds of bad things that come into your life. It is really unloving to water down our faith or hold back at some things because of-- well then what we're saying is we're allowing people to live outside their design which is very destructive.

The most loving thing we can do sometimes, is just speak truth into each other's lives. Colossians says this, "Once you were alienated from God, there were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now, He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight; without blemish and free from accusation." Again, where is God taking us? Once you put your faith in Him, to present you holy in His sight without blemish and free from accusation.

Again in Ephesians, "You are taught with regard to your former way of life to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its sinful desires, and to be made in the attitude of your minds, to put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and wholeness." Again, once we begin to follow Jesus, what do we do? We put on, take off the old self. We put on a new self which is created to be like God where we get to live within His design.

What is Biblical acceptance? Put these all together, What is Biblical acceptance? It is first, accepting people just as they are with all their mess, all their hang ups, all their hurts, all their habits, whatever orientation they have, anything, just as they are and then continue to accept them as we journey together allowing God to shape us and reform our lives. In the process, we help each other become disciples which requires two things or three things I think. It requires patience, it requires forbearance and it definitely requires grace because there are no instant Christians.

There is instant oatmeal. I have instant oatmeal about every other day but there are no instant Christians. Think again, how long have you been a Christian? Do you have your act together yet? Are you perfect yet? Do you have all the doctrine down? Do you understand everything in Scripture yet? Think how many years some of you have been believers and yet I think when it comes to those same sex attraction and transgender, we have a very different standard towards them. We don't expect it of us but we expect it of them. That's not fair. That's treating that community way way too harsh.

Biblical acceptance balances two things I think; it balances truth and it balances grace. I love this article, it came in the mail just this week about tithing. This woman heads Living Sail ministries. She's former homosexual. She is writing about her father who's trans-gendered. She is reflecting on how Jesus treated the woman on the well. Here is what she says, "I can't help but wonder how Jesus would have reached my dad or to your loved one who is transgender or homosexual. I believe he would have asked my dad for a drink for Jesus initiated a conversation to draw people into relationship with him. Jesus was always relational. The conversation became a little tricky though when he asked the woman about her husband.

Nevertheless, Jesus provided a safe environment for her to share that she had no husband. Jesus initiated the relationship, nurtured it and then gently but firmly addressed the sin in her life with no sugar coating. If my dad had appeared as a woman to Jesus, do you think Jesus would have asked my dad his name? If my dad had identified himself as Herod, Jesus might have said, "You're right that is who you are". If my dad had said, Becky, I believe Jesus would have said, "That is not who you are, tell me who you really are."

I also believe if a loved one said, "I'm homosexual," Jesus would have said something like this, "That is not who you really are though." When a loved one wants to be known as someone who he or she is not, do we point out a finger of judgment? No, that isn't what Jesus demonstrated in his interaction with the Samaritan woman. Instead, we see that Jesus was persistent in drawing the woman into conversation with Him. He didn't allow cultural differences scare Him off. He didn't snob the woman when she came to Him to the well. Instead, he erased the cultural line that Jews shouldn't talk to Samaritans. He then dressed her life with truth and showed mercy to the woman. He offered her the gift of God, the power of the Gospel is the Gospel that can heal the wounds of any person. Not only the Samaritan woman who lived in sin but also anyone else who lives a lie.

Jesus didn't look down on her even though he is Lord and King, he didn't act like a superior person. When he addressed the woman's sin, he did so with humility, truth, and compassion. He didn't attempt to make her feel as if she was less than a person and we can follow his example."

So what's Biblical acceptance? It is both accepting people as they are and then being gracious and patient as we come to be more like Jesus. I love how Marcus says, **[unintelligible 00:31:09]** "The goal ultimately is to create an environment where all people feel welcome and where truth is proclaimed in grace and mercy abound." Biblical acceptance is not watering down our doctrine or avoiding **[unintelligible 00:31:24]** teachings of Jesus like the definiteness of marriage or sexual standards, or the singular [lordship?] of Jesus, or the authority of Scripture, nor does it mean that we're self-righteous or hypocritical expecting others to change more rapidly than we do.

It means patiently journeying with others and helping them grow in their faith, and we ourselves growing in our faith, until we all become Christ-like. Paul says, "Bare with each other and forgive one another." Bare with each other, forgive one another. So on the one hand, we're to be tolerant with each other. So if we experience unloving actions, unloving behaviors we realize hate. All of us have sinned. We need

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to bare with each other because all of us are at a different place in our walk with God. At the same time, speaking the truth and love. Calling out things when they're simply are wrong.

This is what it means to live, to accept as Christ has accepted us. Now, I'm halfway but there's no way I'm going to complete this which is okay because I'm going to put the rest of it online because I want to leave you wanting a little bit more. But this is what Biblical acceptance is and as you take that Biblical substance that whole definition and begin to spin it out, let me just give you a quick one. If I begin to spin this out then, what does it cost me to do?

It means there were some changes that will take place in my life if I really accept people just as Christ has accepted me. I think it makes a couple of changes. One, it will get rid of what I call the you-do-it-wrong mentality. After this last week's service, I had a couple people who vehemently disagreed on something and the response to the discussion on money and the millennials was based on what we're seeing the value of a dollar. You know what, **[unintelligible 00:33:26]** spend money extravagantly and it just drives me crazy. I think that's kind of harsh, number one. I think this illustrates what we tend to do as differences, especially across the generations.

But differences between people in general, we tend to take differences and allow them to divide us because we have a sense that our way is the right way, or sometimes that how we see it is the superior way of seeing it. The other way people do it is wrong or it's an inferior way. We tend to do this all the time. My response to, if you feel that way, is I think the millennials understand the value of a dollar. I think they value people more. And extravagant? Yes.

But my daughter spends \$100 in a pair of shoes, as I said, but only afforded is for her. The other is to give shoes to kids who do not have shoes in a third world. I don't find that extravagant, I've find that extravagantly generous. My point is this, rather than seeing differences as opportunities for division or feeling as though they don't get it right and I do, my way is the right way, while theirs is not, is this take differences and see them as opportunities for both sides of the grow.

I think the boomers can help millennials understand that they have a dollar, yes. But I think millennials can help boomers lighten up when it comes to money. And know that there is something more important than getting a good value for your dollar and that is making a difference in people's lives. Because people are more valuable than our money and they do have that right.

Again, I see this happening in marriages too, I'll give you an illustration of how differences can divide. And rather than allowing differences divide, we take those differences and use them to each other's benefits because just because you do it differently doesn't mean you're doing it wrong. When I shop, I shop by list. I am a list shopper. How many of you are list shoppers out there? Wave your hand. List people. Yes, be proud. How many of you are roamers? You shop but you roam. Roamers, you guys make me nuts. I'll tell you that you drive me nuts because you do it wrong.

When you shop, you go fast, get it done, you're just like, "Look how that pretty is. Look how pretty that is." It drives me nuts. But even though it drives me nuts, am I doing it wrong? Are you doing it wrong? Am I doing it right? Or you are doing it right and am I doing it wrong? Who's right? Now, I can make an argument for both actually, never thought about it.

If you're a list shopper, yes, you're going to say you save more money; you are more efficient with time. It's a great strategy when you're in a time crunch, you're less tempted to be materialistic and to shop by impulse. There are values for shopping with list but there's also also values for roamers. In that, roaming people, they're relaxing. They're having fun. It's playful. It's smelling the roses. And sometimes when you roam, it saves you a trip because when you roam, you'll find things that should've been on the list that you forgot to put on the list.

Now, it saves you time, it saves you another trip and sometimes you pick up wonderful bargains that you wouldn't have seen. You'll say, "Oh my gosh there's five for \$1, I'm going to grab that because - -" and you wouldn't have known that unless you roam. There's value with roaming and that's my point is roamers can learn from listers and listers can learn from roamers and rather than letting difference to divide us, we use it to complement and supplement in us. That is true, we are called the body of Christ for a reason means we're lots of parts. So rather than being critical and judgmental each others parts, what we need to do is understand and cherish each other. We need to understand and just cherish each other and get rid of this attitude I'm doing it right and you're doing it wrong.

I think a second way -- how much time have I got? Let me give one more. I think all this really is applicable. I think if all of us are demonstrating the acceptance of Jesus, meaning there are no conditions, age **[unintelligible 00:37:51]** all that huge I gave you, there are no conditions, I think what naturally happens is God will bring a variety of people in our lives because most of us live in a very diverse culture. Do you guys work in a diverse environment? And do you guys go to school in a diverse environment? When you -- activities or entertainment, is the area you're in, your community you're in, is it pretty diverse?

But if they're pretty diverse then, if we really have the same acceptance as Jesus and there are no pre-conditions in our hearts and minds, it means that we will be open to whoever God brings into our lives. If we are in a diverse environment, what will happen natural I believe is, our circle of our friends will be very diverse. It will reflect the diversity of our community.

If your circle of friends doesn't reflect the diversity of community, then what they're saying is we do have some conditions to our acceptance. That really is what is holding Journey down as a Church. I'll tell you why. How this happens is that if I define my circle of friends by my ethnicity, then all my friends will be, in my case, Caucasian. All of them are Caucasian.

Now, let's just use you, you is a better example. All of them will be Asian right? Here's why it is, if all of our circle of friends are Asian means the Asian pool is the only pool we have to grow as a Church. Now, the Asian pool in this area is 2%. That

means if you're a marketer, you're only tapping the 2% of the market. How can a Church grow if you're 2% of the market?

But if we display the acceptance of Jesus and whoever comes into our lives despite with ethnicity or whatever age and all those other things, if we just accept people as God brings them into our lives, our lives will reflect the diversity and that diversity will reflect a broad part of our culture and of our community. Which means, now we're tapping in the probably 70, 80% of our community as a Church. And is it easy to grow as a Church tapping the 80% of the community or just 2%?

That's my point. If we live the radical acceptance of Jesus, it will result naturally in the broadening of our friendships which, again, creates a larger pool for us to invite people, which results in growth of the Church. If you want your Church to grow, I know there's a lot of people who do, then it begins by you widening your circle or friendships. Which begins by simply demonstrating the acceptance of Jesus in your life and removing all those conditions. Which means being uncomfortable. Because it is very uncomfortable talking to people who are different from you, isn't it? It's difficult talking to people across age groups or different ethnicity. It really is.

The real struggle for the Church is to be uncomfortable with being, to being comfortable with being uncomfortable. Let me get that right. And I like-- there's a one book on what being a welcoming Church says that very thing, "To be a welcoming Church requires that we become a place we're all comfortable, where we are all comfortable with being uncomfortable." I like that. That's part of being and demonstrating the acceptance of Jesus.

Which I think it's really modeled in the Lord's Supper. Because as they were having the Lord's Supper, and in the Lord's Supper it's a perfect model of acceptance. Think about the first Lord's Supper. It's Jesus around with the table of the 12 disciples. Now, do they all have their doctrine down? No. In fact, after the resurrection he said, "A good." Some of them still didn't believe in the resurrection. One of the typical doctrines of the Church is believe in the resurrection of Jesus and some of the disciples after the Lord's Supper still didn't believe in the resurrection.

Did they have their morals down? Did they have no sin in their life? Were they morally pure? No. In fact, all the way in Acts:10 here Jesus-- God's confronts Peter of his prejudice against Romans. He has this vision all these food and stuff. Here way after the fact, Peter is still having prejudice towards Roman people. He hates them. Doesn't want anything to do with them.

Think of other things. The disciples themselves, again, what did Jesus do with them? One, he just accepted them around the table and then for the rest of their lives, they journey with faith, through faith in him and they grew over a lifetime becoming more and more like Jesus. That's what the acceptance is, which requires the patience with each other. It means accepting each other as we are but also journeying, be patiently journeying each other so we should become more like him, entering the struggle in each other's lives and creating an atmosphere where that's okay. That's what acceptance is. That's what is modeled here at the table.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father as we receive this Lord's Supper, Lord, help us to really hear and see the radical nature of Biblical acceptance. It sheds incredible light for us to deal with very difficult, uncomfortable, spiritual and moral issues of our day. We thank you for giving us that light that enables now to live like a believer, live out the radical acceptance of Jesus, which means accept the people just as they are and then being. But yet, at the same time, speaking truth into live, so that together as a community we journey together through this life becoming more and more like you, allowing you to shape us into the people you designed us to be.

We pray that you will continue that work through us. As we experience the acceptance of Jesus, help us to express it into others. We ask this in your name. Amen.

**[00:44:06] [END OF AUDIO]**