

Love, Acceptance, and Approval

“The Lord appeared to him from afar saying, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, I have drawn you with lovingkindness.” Jeremiah 31:3

The greatest need of the human heart is love, acceptance and approval. As human beings, created in the image of our Creator, we crave to be loved unconditionally, be accepted for who we are, and to receive approval from God and significant people in our lives.

Love, acceptance, and approval (LAA) strokes are vital to spiritual, emotional and relational health. A confident, joyful walk with God, personal emotional security, and mutually satisfying relationships are the fruit of LAA.

LAA should be lavishly poured into the heart and life of every child that is born into a family. Parents, relatives, siblings, and significant others (teachers, pastors, professionals, community leaders, etc.) should provide abundant LAA strokes in the lives of those they influence. Children who are shown love, acceptance and approval mature into healthy adults who make positive contributions to their culture. LAA is a critical component to successful living.

But sad to say, many people leave home and their communities deprived of the love, acceptance and approval they need to succeed in life. Many feel unloved or loved conditionally. Some feel rejection, while others feel disapproval. The absence of LAA in a person’s life creates an emotional emptiness inside, a hollowness in the heart that needs filled. Lack of LAA can be devastating and paralyzing to a person’s sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

People who have not received positive, healthy LAA will seek it out. There is an inherent danger in that LAA deprived people can be deceived into pursuing and receiving love, acceptance and approval that is unhealthy. The deep need to belong and be loved, accepted and approved, drives some hurting people to fall into the arms of a false lover, join a violent gang, get high with other searching souls, hook up with false hopes, pursue positions, fame and fortune, or seek after false gods that can never deliver the real LAA strokes we need.

The result: even emptier hearts.

*If we have not received adequate LAA in our lives, what can we do? **Damaged love, acceptance and approval can be repaired. God specializes in healing hurting hearts. People with damaged LAA can be healed, restored and renewed.***

Love, acceptance and approval is rooted and grounded in God's unconditional love for us expressed in the sacrificial death and glorious resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ! The Holy Spirit provides the power to make God's love alive in us through our personal faith in Jesus Christ. (I John 4:7-11, Romans 8:31-39, Romans 5:5).

The source of love, acceptance and approval according to scripture is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We are loved by the FATHER. The story of the prodigal son found in Luke 15:11-32 reveals the unconditional love of a father for a wayward son who returned home. The father loved his boy so much that he let him leave home, loved him enough to wait and look for him to return, and loved him by restoring him to full sonship when he came back. His love for his son restored him to the family and community.

You and I are loved unconditionally by our Heavenly Father

We are accepted by the Son Jesus. Ephesians 1:6-7 states *"To the praise of the glory of His grace, where He has made us accepted in the Beloved (Jesus), in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."* Christ's blood redeemed us and made us acceptable to God. Through His grace, our sins have been forgiven, and we stand righteous before the Father, accepted and welcomed by the Son.

You and I are fully accepted by God's only son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are approved by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:16-17 reads *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ..."* As believers in Christ, we have the Holy Spirit's stamp of approval that we belong to God. We are God's children who inherit all the riches of the family of God to whom we belong for time and eternity.

You and I are approved by the Holy Spirit.

I. How You Can Experience God's Love, Acceptance and Approval.

- BELIEVE IT! *LAA is true for you! Believe God's Word that HE LOVES YOU!*
- RECEIVE IT! *Believe means to receive. Welcome God's love into your heart!*
- REJOICE IN IT! *Amazing—God really loves me. This makes me really happy!*

II. How To Treat People Who Have Withheld Love, Acceptance and Approval From You.

- ✓ FORGIVE THEM Father, I forgive _____ for not loving me.
- ✓ RELEASE THEM Father, I release _____ from hurting me.
- ✓ LOVE THEM Father, I choose to love _____ unconditionally.
- ✓ INFLUENCE THEM Father, use me to positively influence _____ with
Your love, acceptance and approval.

III. How You Can Give God's Love, Acceptance, and Approval to People You Love.

- Tell everyone you know that God loves them.
- Build people up with words of approval whenever you can.
- Let people know how special, valuable and significant they are.
- Forgive people when they fail. Help them up when they fall. Believe in them.
- Believe the best. Give the benefit of the doubt. Encourage people to do their best.
- Remember, those who deserve love the least need it the most!

THOUGHT: *When you are tempted to withhold LAA from someone, think about how you would feel if God and people withdrew LAA from you.*

My Confession of Love, Acceptance and Approval

Everyday I choose to believe in my heart and confess with my mouth that God loves me unconditionally, accepts me completely, and approves of me in every way.

Thank you Father for loving me when I was hard to love, accepting me when I was unacceptable, and approving of me when I was not worthy of approval.

This day I will walk in joyful confidence that my Heavenly Father loves me and I will do my best to let others know that love, acceptance and approval is in Him.

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