

**The Basis of Relationships:  
Approval or Acceptance?**  
by Kerry S. Doyal

"I'll never be good enough for him, for her."  
"I'll never measure up."  
"No matter what I do, it is never enough."

Messages like these, intended or not, are damning to one's soul. They are hazardous to relationships. They are contrary to grace and that makes them condemning at their very core.

Sadly, many relationships seem to be based on mutual approval that leads to acceptance of one another. "I like you, you like me" and on that basis, we build our relationship. If one of does not like or approve of the other, the relationship is hindered if not halted. The basis of such a relationship is shaky. If the things you like about me change, our relationship is at risk. The glue is gone. The binding is removed & the relationship falls apart. Our relationship may be just a few less dollars, or a few more pounds, or diminished connections, or lessened abilities away from going into a deep crisis. "Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm 64?" so sang the Beatles.

Intimacy is difficult, if not impossible under such settings. After all, if I expose my true inner self - good & bad - I risk your rejection. Rather than share my hurts, failings, deficiencies, I will instead put my best front up and strive to maintain your approval. If I keep your approval, I keep your acceptance and I show that I have learned the lesson from The Garden: "I am not going to be naked and ashamed."

On what is our relationship with God based? Is it because we are worthy of His approval that He loves and affirms us so much? Is it because of how much good we have done, and evil we have avoided that He sent Jesus to DIE for our us? Did Jesus die to rescue worthy victims or spiritually dead people full of sin? Has this stopped Him from affirming us, accepting us and cultivating relationship with us? Is not our standing with God deepened as we see more fully our failings and confess them to God (failings He is fully aware of anyway)?

How should this effect our relationships? If He loves us DESPITE our failings, not BECAUSE of our accomplishments and still speaks of His love for us, how then should we treat others? Does He love us more if we obey Him more? Isn't grace a matter of unmerited, undeserved favor?!? Do we exude that to others? Do others feel they are at risk of losing our

favor, our acceptance? Do others lose you favor if they lose your approval? What does it take to end your acceptance of others?

True acceptance is freely given in the full light of things one can not approve of.

God can not approve of our sin, yet He offers us unconditional, eternal acceptance in Christ. It is in the context of our security that we strive to please Him. It is knowing we are accepted in the beloved (Jesus) that we work at becoming more like Jesus. We do not seek to continue in sin that grace may abound because of our acceptance. No, we seek to live out the new man He has made us in Christ (Rom. 6:1-4; Eph. 2:1-10; Rom. 5:1-11)!