

# KIDS of INTEGRITY

## Acceptance



**Host a teddy bear tea party, play Sardines and learn not to judge a muffin by its sprinkles! Choose from these ideas, and many others, to help kids mimic God's inclusive love for everyone.**

Positive anticipated outcomes for your children include:

- greater acceptance of another's appearance, culture and preferences
- more inclusive of others in play and conversation
- a significant decrease in teasing or making fun of others.

In addition, this lesson helps address racism, bullying, a mean or critical attitude, and picking on others.

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## Parents' prayer

Although we can try to develop character in our children through various methods and programs, only God can bring about permanent change in a child's heart. Before you begin leading your children through this study on acceptance, spend time alone with God interceding for His help.

Use the sample prayer below, or if you prefer to personalize your prayers, the additional verses under "Scripture-guided prayer" will help provide direction and inspiration.

### Sample prayer

God, you alone are holy, yet You readily accept everyone. Your kingdom is totally inclusive. Thank you for Your unconditional love. **"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"** (1 John 3:1) Being perfect, You would have a right to be choosy about who You adopt as part of Your family, but You accept all of us, regardless of our race, age, gender or appearance. Thank you for offering forgiveness and salvation to anyone who asks for it.

I am humbled by Your unbiased love and my lack of ability to love like You do. I tend to pay less attention to \_\_\_\_\_, exclude \_\_\_\_\_, choose not to be around those who \_\_\_\_\_ and generally avoid people who are \_\_\_\_\_. I cannot claim to have Your love in me, nor is Your love evident in me, if I am not accepting of others. Please forgive me for not loving and accepting others as You do (1 John 4:11).

As I pray for my children, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, I ask that You would help them readily accept others. I ask that they would intentionally include other kids at playtime, be quick to put an arm around a child who is feeling left out, and be willing to stand up for someone who is being teased. Please give them hearts of love that warmly accept others just as they are. When \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are tempted to judge others, or to exclude those less fortunate, less talented or those who are just different, remind them of Romans 15:7: **"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."**

Finally, I ask that You would give our family opportunities to be around people who are different and to care for those who often experience rejection. Let us be the avenue for Your love to be expressed to them. God, we have not seen You, but Your Word says that if we love one another, Your love is made complete in us. Please live in us so our family members are able to love others as You have loved us (1 John 4:11-12). Amen.

### **Scripture-guided prayer for parents**

*Pray through one or more of the selected Scriptures under each heading. Focus on listening to God and allowing His Spirit to direct you as you pray.*

#### **Character focus**

Begin by letting God know how much you appreciate His love and willingness to accept you as part of His family.

Psalm 103:8-13 | John 1:12-14 | Acts 10:34-36 |  
2 Peter 3:9 | 1 John 3:1; 4:9-10,16

#### **Heart search**

Acknowledge where and how you are not accepting of others.

Matthew 7:1-2 | Romans 14:9-10 | Ephesians 4:2-3 |  
James 4:12 | 1 John 3:18; 4:19-21

#### **Gratitude**

Thank God for ways you have seen acceptance exhibited in your family.

#### **Family requests**

Ask God to help you and your children to be as accepting of others as He is.

Romans 14:17-19 | John 13:34-35 | John 15:9-14 |  
1 John 2:5-6 | 1 John 4:11-12

## **Kids talk with God**

*Use this section to help your children learn to reach out to God in all things. The sample prayers all begin with "Dear God," however, you may use any other names for God your children are comfortable with. If your children are ready to formulate their own original prayers, use the Bible verses under "Scripture-guided prayer for children" for inspiration.*

### **Sample prayers**

Dear God, I am tempted to exclude \_\_\_\_\_. I don't like it when he/she does \_\_\_\_\_. Please give me Your love for him/her. Help me to love \_\_\_\_\_ despite how he/she behaves. Amen.

Dear God, I want to be like You! Please help me to love others as Jesus did. Amen.

Dear God, I am tempted to dislike \_\_\_\_\_. Please give me Your love for him/her. Amen.

Dear God, please show me if I have not been sharing Your love with others. Amen.

Dear God, please help me show others that I am Your child by being kind to them. Remind me that I can do this by including others during playtime and by including someone who is left out. Amen.

Dear God, please show me if there is someone who needs my love and acceptance. Amen.

Dear God, I am sorry that I have not been accepting of \_\_\_\_\_. Please help me to show him/her that I have Jesus' love in my heart. Amen.

### **Scripture-guided prayer for children**

*Read through one of the selected Scriptures under each heading and help your children pray based on the verse you read. Encourage them to listen to God and allow His Spirit to guide them as they pray.*

#### **Character focus**

Begin by letting God know how much you appreciate His willingness to accept you as part of His family.

John 3:16 | Acts 10:34 | 1 John 4:12,16

## Heart search

Acknowledge when and how you do not accept or include others.

Matthew 7:1-2 | Ephesians 4:2 | 1 John 4:20

## Gratitude

Thank God for ways you have been accepting of others.

## Personal requests

Ask God to help you, your siblings and parents to be accepting of others, just as He is.

John 13:34-35 | 1 John 4:21 | 1 John 2:5-6

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## Speak a blessing

*Your affirmation will give tremendous encouragement to your children as they strive to grow in the area of acceptance. Use this section as a reminder to “speak a blessing” when you see this godly characteristic in your son or daughter.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ is a boy/girl who readily includes others in games and fun.
- Thank you for including \_\_\_\_\_ (another child) in your playtime. It makes others feel special when we accept them.
- \_\_\_\_\_, great job showing love by \_\_\_\_\_ (including/accepting someone).
- \_\_\_\_\_, God is proud of how you showed His love to your friend/brother/sister by the way you \_\_\_\_\_ (list the action that demonstrated acceptance).

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## Memory verses

*Memorizing Scripture with your children helps God’s Spirit bring about lasting change. Choose a verse that your children can learn in a pre-determined period of time and aim to review the verse at least once every day.*

Matthew 7:1-2 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Matthew 5:44 “But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

Matthew 22:37-39 “Jesus replied, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

John 13:34-35 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”

John 15:10-11 “If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father’s commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.”

John 15:13 “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

John 15:17 “This is My command: Love each other.”

Romans 15:7 “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

Romans 14:19 “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”

1 Corinthians 4:5 “Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive praise from God.”

Galatians 2:6 “. . . God does not judge by external appearance . . .”

Galatians 5:14 “The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Ephesians 4:2-3 “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

James 4:12 “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor?”

1 John 4:11 “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

1 John 4:12 “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.”

1 John 4:16 “And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”

1 John 4:19 “We love because He first loved us.”

1 John 4:21 “And He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

1 John 2:5-6 “But if anyone obeys His word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in Him: Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.”

1 John 3:18 “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”

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## Kick-off craft

Create a poster to help remind your children to practice being accepting of others. Try to have your children complete the poster early in your lessons on acceptance, then display it as a focal point in your home.

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## A very special tree

### Directions

- 1 On poster paper, draw a tree, add branches and leaves, and have your children colour them. The tree can be as simple or as elaborate as you like. You may also choose to go outside and collect small branches and leaves to add colour and texture
- 2 While you are collecting supplies and recording information, talk about how family members are “family” because of a blood relationship: families share the same “blood” or genetics.

The other way we become part of a family is through marriage or adoption. The family of God is similar. God calls the Church His “bride” (Revelation 19:7-8). He also refers to those who are part of His family as adopted “sons” (Ephesians 1:5). Membership in God’s family is possible because of a different blood connection. Jesus shed His blood when He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, making it possible for God to forgive us for our sins.

- 3 Also discuss the fact that no two leaves are exactly alike, and no two people are the same either. Explain that God made all of us different on purpose. Our job is to accept others even when they are different, loving them just the way God made them. Discuss how boring life would be if everyone were exactly the same.

- 4 Write your selected memory verse on your family tree.

Use the family tree as a reminder that we need to accept others as Christ accepted us into His family (Romans 15:7). You can also use the family tree to serve as a reminder that when we are part of God’s family, we are called to love others (John 15:17).

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## Other ideas

If it is winter and collecting leaves outside is not an option, have your children cut out snowflakes instead. After all, trees are decorated with snow in the winter! Snowflakes, like leaves, are all different. Tie in the discussion on individual differences detailed above.

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## Bible stories

This section provides Bible stories with the theme of acceptance, along with questions you can use as a guide for family discussions. Choose one story that is appropriate for your children. Before reading aloud, take a few minutes to review the story. If the Bible passage is too complex for your children, paraphrase the story yourself or use the summary provided under “key concepts.”

### God's children

Read Galatians 3:26-29.

Prior to reading this story to your children as per the summary below, you will need to prepare one simple prop. Find a glass jar with a screw-top lid. Put dirt inside the jar and also make it dirty on the outside. If you wish, draw a face on the outside of the glass using permanent markers.

### Questions for discussion

1. Why do you have a bath?
2. When do you dress in nice clothes?
3. How can we wash the inside of the jar?
4. What do we need to have washed away before we can become a member of God's family?
5. How does God wash the sin from our insides?
6. Why did Jesus take the punishment for our sins?
7. Who does God accept into His kingdom of heaven?
8. How did God show His love for us?

### Key concepts

God is ready to welcome anyone into His family. It doesn't matter what colour our skin is, where we live, who our parents are or if we have been good or bad. It doesn't matter if we are men or women or even children. God loves everyone.

However, just like we take a bath and dress in clean clothes before we go someplace special, we need to have our sins washed away before we can become

part of God's family. We can wash the outside of our bodies ourselves, but we all need God to wash the sin out of our insides before we can become one of God's children (Psalm 51:7, Hebrews 1:3, 1 John 2:2).

At this point, have your children help you give the jar a “bath,” washing the dirt off the outside of the jar. Once it is clean, point out that an ordinary bath doesn't wash the inside.

God needs to wash our sins away because He cannot be around any sin at all (1 Thessalonians 1:9, Romans 8:5-8). The Bible tells us that the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). This means that all of us who sin deserve to die for our sins. We all have sinned and we all deserve to die (Romans 3:23).

Fortunately, God loves us so much that He doesn't want us to die (1 Timothy 2:3-4, 2 Peter 3:9). He wants us to be a part of His family and live with Him in heaven someday (2 Peter 3:13). So God sent His Son, Jesus, to show us how much He loves us (John 3:16). Jesus took the punishment for our sins. He died so that all the wrong things we have done can be forgiven (Romans 5:8, 1 Corinthians 15:3).

Take the lid off the jar and explain that, when we ask Him, God washes our sins away. Fill the jar with some water, swish it around and pour out the dirty water.

Now God has washed all the sin away. When we pray and ask for God to forgive our sins, He does forgive us and we become one of His children. In the Bible, it says, “Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). Everyone who believes in Jesus and asks Him to forgive their sins is accepted as a member of God's family.

### Loving and accepting everyone

Read Luke 5:27-32 and Luke 6:27-31.

### Questions for discussion

1. Why did the people judge Jesus?
2. What did they think He was doing wrong?
3. What do some of your friends do wrong?

4. Does God love them?
5. How can you be like Jesus and be a “doctor” for your friends when they sin?

### Key concepts

When Jesus was on earth, tax collectors were very unpopular because they sometimes made people pay unfair amounts of money in taxes. The Pharisees and teachers of the law started complaining because Jesus was friendly to a tax collector named Levi. But Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick” (Luke 5:31). He said that He came to help the sinners, not the righteous. Jesus does not limit His love. He loves everyone just the same.

We can love and accept others even if we don’t like what they do. It is easy to want to avoid children who often do wrong. The Bible says that we shouldn’t be concerned about what another person is doing, but rather we should be concerned about our own actions because each of us will give an account of himself to God (Romans 14:12).

The Bible also tells us that we should pray for people who mistreat us (Luke 6:28). For example, if a child is not fun to play with because he/she will not share toys, it is easy to reject him/her and choose not to play with him/her. But Jesus would rather that we pray for the selfish child, asking that he/she will learn to share.

### A good heart

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

### Questions for discussion

1. Why did Samuel think that Eliab, the oldest son, was the one he was to anoint as the next king?
2. When we look at another person’s physical appearance, what are some things that we might notice?
3. What does God look at when He looks at a person?
4. Should we be accepting of others based on how they look?

5. How do we show that we accept another person?

### Key concepts

When Samuel was sent by God to anoint one of Jesse’s sons as the next king of Israel, Samuel was tempted to judge Jesse’s sons by their looks – their appearance and their height. Fortunately, Samuel listened to God and anointed (chose) Jesse’s youngest son, David. Even Jesse, David’s father, was surprised by God’s choice. But God could see what the heart of each of these boys was like. God knew which boy would make a good king for Israel. He chose David because He knew that David loved God very much.

We can judge others by their looks too, without even realizing that we are judging them. Pre-judging someone is called “prejudice” and God doesn’t want us to pre-judge anyone. We should not accept or reject others based on how they look. We should accept everyone as God accepts us (Romans 15:7). We show love and acceptance when we treat others kindly, talk to them and share with them.

### The unlikely “Z”

Read Luke 19:1-10 and 1 John 2:5-6.

*If your children are very familiar with the story of Zacchaeus, you may want to consider sharing a modern re-telling of the Zacchaeus story alongside the story from the Bible. For example, as you tell your story, substitute a bossy kid named Zach for Zacchaeus.*

*Other ideas include stating that the other children in the playground do not like to play with Zach because of his bossiness. Progress the plot by telling about an exciting afternoon when a clown from the local church visits the park. When the clown sits down to have lunch with the bossy boy, the other children complain. Have the mother of one of the complaining children explain that the clown wanted to share Jesus’ love with the unloved boy.*

### Questions for discussion

1. Why did the people disapprove of Zacchaeus?
2. How did Jesus show love to Zacchaeus?
3. What do other kids do that you don’t like?

4. What do you think Jesus would say to these kids if He went to their house?
5. God cannot allow any sin into heaven. What kind of plan did God make to allow for sinners to be forgiven and accepted into His family? (See “God’s children,” the first Bible story in this section.)
6. How can you help others learn about Jesus when you are with them?

### **Key concepts**

When Jesus spent time with Zacchaeus, a tax collector, people complained because Zacchaeus was known as a sinful man. The day that Jesus came to Zacchaeus’ house, Zacchaeus believed in Jesus and Jesus told him that he was saved from his sins and was accepted into God’s family. When the people complained about Jesus visiting a “sinner’s house,” Jesus said that He came to “seek and save what was lost.” In saying this, Jesus meant that He came to teach those who didn’t know about God and His plan for accepting everyone into His family. We can help others learn about Jesus by sharing His love with them, especially by accepting those whom others reject – just as Jesus did with Zacchaeus.

### **Accepting those who are different**

Read Acts 10.

*You may choose to paraphrase and shorten this story or use the summary in the “key concepts” below.*

### **Questions for discussion**

1. How was Cornelius different from Peter?
2. Why did Peter go and visit Cornelius?
3. What did Peter tell Cornelius?
4. Who can be accepted into God’s family? (See “God’s children,” the first Bible story in this lesson.)
5. How should we treat people who are different from us?

### **Key concepts**

Cornelius was not a Jew, but he loved and served God faithfully. God sent an angel to Cornelius and the angel told him to go and find a man named Peter who lived in a town called Joppa. At the same time, God told Peter that he should go with the men who had come to fetch him and take him to visit Cornelius.

This was unusual because, at that time, it was against the rules of the Jews for them to visit with Gentiles (Acts 10:28). People who were not Jews were called Gentiles. Jews believed that they were the only people who could be a part of God’s family because God told them that they were His chosen ones.

When Peter went and visited Cornelius, Peter realized that God accepted people of all nations who feared Him and did what was right. God gave the gift of His Holy Spirit to Cornelius and his family that day. Peter also baptized them, which showed others that they were followers of Jesus Christ and part of God’s family. Peter accepted Cornelius because God asked him to. God also asks us to accept others as He accepts us (Romans 15:7).

### **Blind Bart**

Read Mark 10:46-52, 1 John 2:5-6 and 1 John 3:18.

*To enable deeper understanding, you may choose to blindfold your children during the story or during your discussion time.*

### **Questions for discussion**

1. What was Bartimaeus’ handicap?
2. Do you know anyone who has a handicap?
3. How hard would it be to find someone if you were blind?
4. What did the people do when Bartimaeus needed help?
5. What could they have done to help Bartimaeus?
6. How can you love and accept someone with a handicap?

- How should you not treat someone with a handicap?
- How did Jesus show love to Bartimaeus?

### Key concepts

Bartimaeus had a handicap. A handicap is when a person has something wrong with their body that prevents them from doing things that other people can do. Bartimaeus' handicap was blindness.

Jesus was walking through a town called Jericho when He heard a Bartimaeus call His name. Bartimaeus begged Jesus to have mercy on him. Others who heard the blind man shouting told him to be quiet. Instead of helping Bartimaeus find Jesus, they discouraged him, even though he was blind and helpless.

Bartimaeus wanted Jesus to cure his blindness. He believed that Jesus could heal him. Jesus said that because Bartimaeus had faith in Him, Bartimaeus would be able to see. The story tells us that immediately Bartimaeus could see.

Jesus showed love to Bartimaeus by healing him. We can show love to those who have handicaps by accepting them and being kind to them (1 John 2:5-6, 1 John 3:18). Another story about showing love and acceptance to a handicapped person is found in 2 Samuel 9. King David showed kindness to Mephibosheth, his friend Jonathan's son, even though he was crippled. David cared for him and allowed him to eat at his table every day.

### Jesus shares God's love with the Samaritan woman at the well

Read John 4:3-42.

*If the word "Saviour" is new to your children, explain that the word "Saviour" is like the word "save." If someone helps others, they are called a helper. Because Jesus saves us from our sins, He is called our Saviour.*

### Questions for discussion

- Why did the woman wonder why Jesus asked her for a drink of water?

- What did Jesus say to the woman that made her believe that He was the Saviour of the world?
- What country do we live in?
- Can you think of anyone who comes from a different country?
- What kind of things do people from \_\_\_\_\_ (name a country) do differently than we do here in \_\_\_\_\_ (name your own country)?
- How can we show love and acceptance to someone who comes from a different country?
- Why should we accept others?

### Key concepts

Jesus stopped at a well in a town called Sychar in a region called Samaria. In those days, Jews did not speak to people who came from Samaria. Jews and Samaritans hated each other and had fought with each other for many, many years.

At the well, Jesus met a Samaritan woman and asked her to give Him a drink of water. The woman was surprised that Jesus, a Jew, spoke to her. Jesus explained to the woman that He could give her much more than water; He could give her eternal life.

Because Jesus told her things about her life that no ordinary stranger could have known, the woman believed Jesus when He told her that He was the Saviour of the world (John 4:29). She went and told the people from her town about Jesus. Many other Samaritans, when they heard the woman's story about Jesus, also believed that Jesus was the Saviour of the world. God accepted the Samaritan woman into His family. He asks us to accept others as He does.

### Helping a neighbour

Read Luke 10:25-37.

### Questions for discussion

- Who are the four people mentioned in this story?

2. How were these four people different from one another?
3. Why do you think the first two men did not want to help the wounded man?
4. How did the Samaritan show love to the injured man?
5. Was it difficult for the Samaritan man to help the injured man?
6. Do you think Jesus would have helped the injured man?
7. Why do we choose not to help people sometimes?
8. Can you think of some ways we could help the people who are our neighbours?
9. How do love and acceptance go together?

### Key concepts

Jesus told a story about a man who was travelling from Jericho to Jerusalem. The man was robbed, stripped of his clothes, beaten and left hurt and bleeding on the side of the road. A priest (a church leader) came down the same road and saw the injured man, but passed by on the other side of the road.

Next, along came a Levite man. Levites were people who helped the priests. The Levite also passed by on the other side of the road. These men may have been afraid of being hurt themselves, or they may have been concerned that if they helped the man, that they would not be allowed to do their jobs at the temple.

Finally, a Samaritan man walked down the road and saw the wounded man. Samaritans and Jews considered each other to be enemies. It was not likely that the Samaritan even lived in that area. He was probably just another traveller passing through. However, the Samaritan man decided to help the injured man. He put the injured man on his donkey, took him to an inn (hotel) and took care of him.

The next day the Samaritan offered to pay the innkeeper for the injured man's room and care until he was better. When He reached the end of this story, Jesus said, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). It makes God happy when we show His love to others by being kind, caring and fair (Jeremiah 9:24).

## Creative discipline

*Few parents enjoy their God-given responsibility of disciplining their children, and even fewer children enjoy being on the receiving end. The Bible tells us to expect discipline to be uncomfortable, but also promises positive results. This section will provide you with innovative suggestions to use when correcting your children, to help them learn to practice acceptance.*

### For problems with excluding others

#### Biblical basis

1 John 4:20-21 "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."

### Suggested disciplinary action

Discuss the following questions with your child:

- Can you tell me how you are feeling?
- Can you tell me how \_\_\_\_\_ is feeling?
- Why don't you want to play with \_\_\_\_\_?
- How can you show \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus' love?
- Are you ready to play with \_\_\_\_\_?

*If the answer is "Yes," proceed to affirmation.*

*If "No," then have your child take time away from playing, or ask him/her to play on his/her own instead of with the group until he/she decides that everyone will be included.*

## Affirmation

Affirm your child by letting them know that you believe that they have God's love in their heart.

Read or quote 1 John 4:12: "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us."

Pray with your son or daughter, asking God to help them be willing to share His love by including others in their playtime.

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## For problems with judging others

When a child chooses to not accept or include another child, it is often because they have "judged" them. For example, your child may be thinking, "They will use the toys I want to use," or "They won't be any fun to play with," or "They are different." When your child has chosen to judge others, it is a good time to discuss the seriousness of their judgmental thoughts or actions.

## Biblical basis

James 4:12 "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor?" Also Romans 2:1-3.

You may wish to use this paraphrase for younger children:

We have no right to judge others because we also do wrong. It is God's job to judge others because He is the only one who is perfect. God says that if we judge others, He will judge us, too, because we are guilty of the same wrongdoing that others are.

## Suggested disciplinary action

Discuss the following questions with your child:

- I'm guessing that you don't want to play with \_\_\_\_\_. Is that true?
- What is it that \_\_\_\_\_ does that makes you feel this way?
- You are correct that it is wrong to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Have you ever \_\_\_\_\_? (Done something similar that was wrong.)

Emphasize that it is good to recognize sin as sin, but it is not our job to condemn the person because of their sin, because we, too, sin. It is wrong for us to judge someone for being \_\_\_\_\_ (whatever sin has been identified) because at some point in time we are all guilty of sin. (*Gently remind your child of a time they have done what they are judging the other child for doing.*) Excluding a friend from play because they have done something wrong is condemning them.

(Close by reminding your child that it is God's job to judge others, not ours.) Even though others may do wrong at times, we need to continue to show love to them. Just as God accepts us as we are – and we are all sinful at times – we also need to accept others. Let's pray for \_\_\_\_\_ that he/she will quit doing this.

- Are you ready to go and talk with \_\_\_\_\_ and then play with \_\_\_\_\_?

If the answer is "Yes," proceed to affirmation.

If "No," then have your child take time away from playing, or ask him/her to play on his/her own until he/she decides that he/she is willing to play with others, despite their shortcomings.

## Affirmation

Pray and thank God for loving everyone, even though we are all sinful. Ask Him to help everyone in your family to do the same.

Read or quote Romans 15:7: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." Challenge your child to bring praise to God by the way he/she treats others. Assure him/her that you believe that he/she can be accepting of the faults of others and, in doing so, will bring praise to God.

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## Hands-on options

*Often, we are consumed by the busyness of day-to-day living and we forget to look for opportunities to teach our children God-honouring character traits. These ideas require very little preparation, making it easy for you to share some simple but memorable lessons with your kids. Read over the suggestions at the beginning of your week and choose one or two that will fit your schedule.*

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### Teddy bear tea party

*drama / role play*

Stage a tea party for the stuffed animals that “live” in your home. Don’t let your kids know, ahead of time, that the goal is to practice inclusiveness. Just set up the tea party and have your children begin gathering stuffed animals. Wait and see if they bring all their animals or not. Chances are, some will be left out. (If your children will likely bring every single one of their stuffed animals, hide one for use later. This can be an excellent opportunity to affirm them in their choice to include “everyone.”)

After the “guests” have arrived, ask your children if there are any others who would like to come. If they do bring more, it’s your cue to act the part of the stuffed animals who have been added to the party. Exclaim how delighted you are to have been invited as well.

Finally, ask if there are any others. When the final answer is “No,” see if you can find any that have been left out, or retrieve the one you stashed away. Play the part of the excluded stuffed animal and cry (or otherwise illustrate how bad you feel). While you have “tea” with all the stuffed animals, talk about the importance of including others in play and in conversations.

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### Paper dolls or cookie people

*creative crafts or fun with food*

Cut out paper dolls and have your children decorate them. After they are done, use the discussion questions below to begin a dialogue about favouritism and accepting individual differences.

Explain that just as none of the paper dolls are alike, God made people with individual differences as well. People can be similar or very different, but no two

people will ever be exactly alike. Explain that we find it easy to choose a favourite paper doll, but God does not choose favourites – He loves all of us exactly the same.

You can do the same activity with “roll and cut” cookie dough. Roll out the dough and have your children make at least ten cookies using the same cookie cutter. These can be compared afterwards, just as you compared the paper dolls. Once again, no two will be alike, and even the rejects or the “funny-looking” ones will taste good. The dolls and cookies can also be used to role play inclusive and exclusive playtime activities.

### Questions for discussion

- Can you find any two paper dolls that are the same?
- Which is your favourite doll?
- What kind of food do you enjoy eating most?
- What kind of activities do you enjoy?
- What is your brother’s/sister’s/friend’s favourite food/hobby?
- What would our family be like if everyone were the same?
- Does God have favourites?

### Relevant Scripture

Acts 10:34-35 “Then Peter began to speak: ‘I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right.’”

Romans 2:11 “For God does not show favoritism.”

James 2:8-9 “If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.”

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## **Understanding cultural differences**

### *fun with food*

For a mini-version of a cross-cultural experience, cook or purchase a meal or an appetizer that is culturally different from the food your family is accustomed to. Encourage your children to sample the ethnic food and discuss being open-minded towards different food or people.

As part of the meal, you may also want to have your children put coloured nylon stockings over their arms. Simply cut the feet out of a pair of knee-high stockings. During the meal, point out that a different coloured covering (skin) on a person's body doesn't mean they are different from others inside.

For a more in-depth version of this activity, invite someone from another country or different cultural background over to your house, or visit him or her in their home. Prepare questions to ask them ahead of time. Share a special family tradition or custom with them and ask them to do the same.

If you would like to fully immerse you children in a cross-cultural experience without leaving your home, consider billeting foreign students.

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## **Modelling inclusiveness**

### *physical activity*

Set your children up to want to be included. Play an active, fun game involving yourself and another person within earshot of your children. Hopefully, they will come over and ask to be included. Model inclusiveness by saying, "Of course, we'd love to have you play." Then play the game together.

Ask the following questions to debrief after the game:

### **Questions for discussion**

- How did you feel when we included you?
- Was it fun to join in?
- How would you have felt if we had said, "No, we want to play by ourselves. Go away!"?
- When and where might you be tempted to exclude someone?

Explain that telling a child that he/she is not welcome to play can be one of the most hurtful things they could ever say to another child. It feels terrible to be left out. End by reading Luke 6:31 and then close by praying together.

### **Relevant Scripture**

Luke 6:31 "Do to others as you would want them to do to you."

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## **Singing about acceptance**

### *drive time or any time*

Any time is a good time to reinforce learning through singing. Some helpful songs include the following:

- "Jesus Loves the Little Children," available on the CD *VeggieTales 25 Favorite Sunday School Songs*.
- "Love Your Neighbor," available on the CD *VeggieTales 25 Favorite Sunday School Songs*.
- "I Can Be Your Friend," available on the DVD *VeggieTales Live! Sing Yourself Silly*.

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## **Hide and Seek - Sardines version**

### *physical activity*

Play the Sardines version of Hide and Seek. After one person hides, all the others search for them. When a seeker finds the hidden person, they quietly join them in their hiding place. Continue until everyone finds the hiding place and joins in the huddle.

After the game, talk about how good it feels to be included. Ask your children how they would have felt if those in the huddle had told them to go away instead of joining the huddle. End by praying that God would help them be children who readily include others in play.

*Note: Younger children may need to be paired with an adult to play this game.*

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## **Accepting new ideas**

### *drive time*

While travelling in the car, ask your children to find a pizza parlour. Ask if they know which country pizza was originally from. Explain that pizza was originally made in Italy. People enjoyed this Italian dish so

much that it soon became popular all over the world. If people had not been open-minded about tasting a flat piece of bread baked with tomato sauce and cheese, made by their Italian neighbours, maybe we wouldn't have pizza parlours all over Canada and the United States.

Brainstorm other ways that our culture has been accepting of ideas from other countries. Some ideas include German, Japanese and other foreign cars, and Chinese and other ethnic foods. Extend this activity, if you wish, by examining items in your own home or going on a shopping trip.

## Water and oil

*science with a twist*

You will need  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of milk, 3 tbsp. of cooking oil, food colouring, 1 cup of flour, a mixing bowl and a spoon.

- 1 Colour the milk with food colouring so that it will contrast with the oil when the oil is added.
- 2 Add the cooking oil to the milk and ask your child to mix the two ingredients together. The water and oil may appear to mix initially, but will eventually separate again.
- 3 Explain that the water and oil represent two people who are having a hard time getting along or accepting each other's differences. Give examples that are appropriate to your children's lives.
- 4 Next, measure out the flour. Explain that the flour represents the Holy Spirit. Have your children mix the flour, water and oil together. When the flour is added, the other two ingredients will no longer separate.
- 5 Finish by reading Ephesians 4:2-3. Explain that when we allow God's Holy Spirit to fill us, we will find it easier to be humble, gentle and patient with others. The result of God's Spirit living in us is that we will experience more peace in our relationships with others.

## Relevant Scripture

Ephesians 4:2-3 "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

*Note: If you don't want to waste the ingredients, add 1 tsp. of baking powder,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. of baking soda, and 1 egg to the flour, oil and water mixture. Mix it all together and you will have some colourful pancake batter. If yellow, pink, blue or green pancakes are not appetizing to your children, this is another opportunity to encourage your children to keep an open mind rather than making a judgement based on appearance.*

## Funny fruit

*fun with food*

While you are grocery shopping, choose a piece of fruit or vegetable that looks funny on the outside but actually tastes sweet. Kiwi fruit, lychees, dragon fruit and coconuts are good examples.

## Questions for discussion

- Can you describe what the fruit looks like on the outside?
- What do you imagine the fruit looks like on the inside?
- From looking at the outside, do you think it will taste good?

Once you are home, peel or slice open the fruit and compare what your children thought the fruit would look like and what it really looks like. Taste it as well. The questions for discussion can create further opportunity to point out that only God knows what is inside our hearts and that we should not judge others.

## More questions for discussion

- Did it taste like you thought it would?
- Who knows what is in your heart?
- How would you feel if someone decided that they didn't like you just by looking at a picture of you?

## Relevant Scripture

James 4:12 “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor?”

Romans 2:1-3 “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment?”

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## Judging by appearances

*fun with food*

Make some muffin batter. (Cupcakes or cookies can be used in place of muffins if you wish.) Prior to baking the muffins, scoop out enough batter to make just a few muffins and place it in a separate bowl. Add ¼ to ½ cup of salt to that small amount of batter and mix it well. Keep track of the salty ones when you bake them.

After the muffins are baked, decorate the salty ones with icing and sprinkles. Leave the regular muffins plain. Allow your children to choose a muffin to eat. It is most likely that they will want the nicely decorated ones.

After they have tasted a salty muffin and decide that they don’t care to eat it, give them a regular muffin. For children who choose the plain muffin, you can tell them they chose wisely and have them sample the salty one anyway.

Review the questions for discussion below as you enjoy eating the regular muffins. The key points to emphasize are that appearances don’t tell us everything we need to know about others. We need to take the time to get to know others by asking them questions about themselves and spending time with them. This is how we can learn to appreciate people for who they really are, rather than judging them by how they look.

## Questions for discussion

- How are some kids different from others?

- How do you choose which children you will play with?
- Which kids often get left out?
- Have you ever met someone who is like the plain muffin?
- Have you ever met someone who is like the muffin with sprinkles?
- What kind of people does God love – those who are like the salty muffins, or those like the plain muffins?
- Who does God want us to love?

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## Relevant Scripture

1 John 4:11-12 “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.”

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## Grafting branches

*getting into nature*

Take a book out of your local library or talk with your children about how branches are grafted. Explain that in nature, a tree trunk will accept and nourish the branch of another tree. For example, a tree that grows red apples only will allow a tree branch from another apple tree to grow from its trunk, together with its own branches.

In Romans 11:17-24 we read about how God’s kingdom is like a tree. Some branches were broken off to make room for others. The branches that were broken off represent the people who did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. God’s plan is that anyone who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God can become part of His family (John 1:12). The Bible also tells us that we must accept each other just as He accepts us and whoever loves God must also love his brother (Romans 15:7, 1 John 4:19-21).

Read the verses cited in the previous paragraph, then review the following questions to stimulate further conversation.

## Questions for discussion

- Did we deserve to be grafted into God's family tree?
- Have you ever been tempted to reject someone?
- What does God expect you to do?

## Relevant Scripture

John 1:12 "Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."

Romans 15:7 "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

1 John 4:19-21 "We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."



## Recommended resources

For a list of children's stories that reinforce the theme of this lesson, consult the home page for the **acceptance** lesson at [Kidsofintegrity.com](http://Kidsofintegrity.com).

# Planning card for acceptance

point form

## God's way

### I am demonstrating godly character when:

- I accept others, even if they are different
- I include others in play and conversation
- I show others that I am interested in them

## My way

### When I am tempted to:

- choose not to include others in play or conversation
- judge others
- tease or laugh at another person

## And God is pleased!

## I know that I need to go to God for help.

*This week, we will focus on learning about acceptance by:*

*Date complete:*

**Daily reminders:** PRAY! | Speak words of blessing and affirmation | Review memory verse

**Memory verse:**

# Planning card for acceptance

calendar form

## God's way

### I am demonstrating godly character when:

- I accept others, even if they are different
- I include others in play and conversation
- I show others that I am interested in them

## My way

### When I am tempted to:

- choose not to include others in play or conversation
- judge others
- tease or laugh at another person

## And God is pleased!

## I know that I need to go to God for help.

### This week, we will focus on learning about acceptance by:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Daily reminders: **PRAY!** | Speak words of blessing and affirmation | Review memory verse

Memory verse: