

Development Phase Selected: Beginning

You selected the statement, "I am called not only to receive, but also to offer God's gracious acceptance to others."

Congratulations! You have made a first step in beginning a relationship with Jesus through engaging in a relationship with other believers. This is a big step forward in your journey of discipleship. You have begun to realize that it is not all about you, but about how you allow God to work through you.

Included in this development step is the idea that you are going to be in relationship with people who are not like you. Some of them may have differing viewpoints about how God is at work in the world. Others may engage in lifestyles that you find uncomfortable. Some people will disappoint you when they fail to live up to your expectations, and others may do something that will offend you or hurt you. A key in offering 'God's gracious acceptance' to others is that you will practice forgiveness and reconciliation.

This is definitely a sign of God already at work in your life! You are beginning the journey of being a vessel of God's grace by extending the love and acceptance of God to others.

What's Next?

The church is a great place to get comfortable with the practices of acceptance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

As we develop these practices and get comfortable with them in our relationships with other believers, they become ingrained in our lifestyles and worldviews.

While the church is a great training ground for these practices, the next step is to engage people beyond the church with the same attitudes of acceptance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. This may be more of a challenge since churches tend to draw together people of similar beliefs and lifestyles. But it is worth the risk and effort, because people are drawn to Jesus through the lives of disciples who reflect the hospitality God has already shown to them.

For example, you might try engaging in a relationship with someone who is:

- a generation older or younger than you
- from a different racial group
- from a different cultural group
- from a different lifestyle group

These were common practices of Jesus, and we are called to model our lives after him!

As you engage people who are different from you, consider the following:

- What things do we have in common?
- What are our stories of experiencing God at work in our lives?
- What can we learn from each other?
- How can our diversity strengthen the body of Christ and our witness to the world?

Suggested Resources

If you want to read about the relationship God offers to you, we suggest the following resources:

Following Jesus, by Carolyn Slaughter

A Disciple's Path, by James Harnish and Justin LaRosa

Foundations, by Phil Maynard

Making Room, by Christine Pohl