

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

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MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

No. 1

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The Realm of Thanksgiving

Many years ago I was in the sanctuary of another church. Before it was time for the service to start different people would gather in various groups and engage in general conversations, just like they do here and in most other churches. I remember this one particular time when I was talking with a man that was complaining about another church member. During the conversation I was thinking if you were truly following Christ then you would not be having this problem with the other person. The human relationship problem was in the hands of the individual and presented itself as a problem due to a failure to surrender his life to the heavenly realm presented to us by Jesus. When we completely surrender to Christ then negative human emotions that upset us get flushed out and replaced with love, acceptance, understanding, and peace.

I have faults and I know I have faults. I have to live my life in spite of my shortcomings and deal with them to the best of my abilities. I want others to accept me in spite of my faults. However, in order for others to accept us in spite of our faults, as a Christian, we have to be willing to accept others in spite of theirs. We are forbidden to judge who has the most faults or who has faults that may be worse. We all have faults and we all have to accept others in spite of theirs. I realize this is all easier said than done. However, when we are ruled by our emotions the focus is on the self, our own individual feelings, and whatever others may have done that trigger these negative feelings. Instead of being concerned with negative emotions, we can be living within the realm of thanksgiving by focusing on the glory of God; the love, acceptance, and peace that God has graciously given to us. When we are thankful and grateful for what God has done for us and focus our attention on that, our human relationship problems are reduced significantly. It's a matter of choosing which realm you live in, the realm of human emotions, or the realm of God's glory - the realm of thanksgiving.

Jesus teaches us to accept others just as they are with their weaknesses, faults, shortcomings, and all of their hidden skeletons. He does not use those exact words but that is what he teaches through his lessons and the life that he lived. We are to emulate Jesus who accepts us as we are and that is a terrific thing because we all have our own weaknesses, faults, and shortcomings. If we truly realize that God accepts us just as we are, even though we are full of problems, faults, sins, and far from being perfect, then we live in a realm of thanksgiving.

When we come to terms with who Jesus is and what God has actually done for us, when we come to terms with the value of this gift of love from God and how it is given to us, and when we come to terms with the fact that we are unworthy of such a gift, then we can't help but appreciate what God has done for us. As a consequence we end up surrendering the negative human emotions that create barriers in our relationships and embrace the realm of thanksgiving. If we want others to accept us as we are then we have to be willing to accept others as they are. Most conflict and human relationship problems come from not letting go of selfish emotions because our focus tends to be on the realm of human problems instead of the realm of thanksgiving. Once we come to terms with who God is and God has done for us through Jesus, then we get to live in the realm of thanksgiving and that is a whole lot happier place to be in.

George