



EMBRACE

FELLOWSHIP | 02

SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Session Objective:

To understand the importance of self-acceptance in one's desire to reach out and love others.

C

CONNECT

Share to the group the words and names that folks used to tease you when you were younger.

A

AFFIRM

THE WORD

Study the concept of acceptance from the points of view of the three characters in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

"Jesus continued: 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate." So he divided his property between them.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. "So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said,. 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'

"So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate For this son of mine was lost and is found.'

"So they began to celebrate. Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come, he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

"My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'" — Luke 15:11-32

The Father

He was the epitome of true acceptance. When his younger son asked for his inheritance, he took it with a big heart. His loving conduct did not leave any doubt in his son's mind that he would accept him back.

The Elder Son

He could not accept his wayward brother. For him acceptance ought to be deserved, and for him it is by being good.

The Younger Son

He reached the lowest point in his life--feeding the pigs and even eating from their food. He needed to accept his mistake that it was altogether wrong for him to leave his father's house.

Ponder on the following thoughts on self- acceptance.

"...A person can commit to God only that part of himself which he understands and accepts... - Cecil Osborne

"We can never feel forgiven for an emotion we will not admit having. It is impossible to confess to God what we will not confess to ourselves." - Cecil Osborne

"We cannot change anything in ourselves unless we accept it. Condemnation does not liberate, it oppresses. The lack of self-acceptance is the essence of the moral problem. It is also the acid test of one's whole outlook in life. That I feed the beggar, that I forgive an insult, that I love my enemy in the name of Christ — all these are undoubtedly great virtues... But what if I should discover that the least among them all, the poorest of all the beggars, the most impudent of all offenders, yes the very fiend himself—that these are in me, and I myself stand in need of the alms of my own kindness, that I myself am the enemy who must be loved— what then?" - Jung, to a group of ministers, 1932

You will not be able to accept another if you have not learned to accept yourself. For just as others are human, so are you, and the acceptance that you are asked to give others is the same acceptance that you need yourself. It is really impossible to truly love others while hating yourself, and your inability to accept others is really a reflection of your inability to accept yourself.

By providing a loving group that is willing to accept a person unconditionally, the CARE Group is helping its members to accept themselves as persons whom God loves and values despite their flaws and imperfections.

THE LIFE

Share to the group some of the things in your life that you still have not made peace with.

Appearance: _____

Abilities: _____

Relationships: _____

Social status: _____

Past (mistakes and failures): _____

Painful experiences of rejection: _____

R **RESPOND**

Write a short letter addressed to yourself, promising that for all the imperfections that you have, you will lovingly accept yourself as a person.

E **EXALT**

THROUGH SONG

Search Me O God

Search me, O God, and know my heart today
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray:
See if there be some wicked way in me:
Cleanse me from every sin, and set me free.

I praise Thee, Lord, for cleansing me from sin;
Fulfill Thy word and make me pure with in;
Fill me with fire, where once I burned with shame
Grant my desire to magnify Thy name.

Lord, take my life, and make it wholly Thine:
Fill my poor heart with Thy great love divine;
Take all my will, my passion, self and pride;
I now surrender, Lord, in me abide.

THROUGH PRAYER

Pray for the grace of self-acceptance so that your group members will learn to properly love themselves resulting in their capacity to truly accept others.