



Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

“The ‘A’ List”

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Whenever I was having trouble getting along with other kids in school, my mother would bring up “the three A’s.” She would remind me that other kids, as did I, needed acceptance, approval, and appreciation. Then she would tell me that if I wanted friends, I had to be a friend.

We all need social acceptance and approval; we fear rejection. We need to be able to accept ourselves as well as others. We need acceptance in order to have sufficient confidence in order to reach our full potential. The need for acceptance can drive us to some interesting behaviors, like flattering others to gain their approval, trying to gain favor through a plastic persona, rejecting others before being rejected, holding prejudices as one of many protective strategies, and lying in order to ingratiate oneself to someone else. Let’s face it; no one likes to be rejected.

By the time I was doing undergraduate work at Northwestern University, people around me were talking about Abraham Maslow’s “hierarchy of need.” At the most basic need level would be physiological needs, like breathing, food, water, and sleep. Next up would be things related to safety and security, like personal safety, resources, morality, family, health, and property. Then there is the need for belonging and love, which would encompass friendship, family, and relationships with significant others. Only then would one reach the level of esteem issues, like respect, confidence, acceptance, and achievement. Maslow’s highest level is “self-actualization,” dealing with morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, acceptance of facts, and living free of prejudice.

Okay. But I found in my own life that knowing about these needs wasn’t exactly having them met; that is, until I came to truly understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ and what it really means to be “accepted in the Beloved.” Paul says this in Ephesians 1:3-7:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In whom we have redemption through His blood, forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. (Ephesians 1:3-7)

The word “accepted” here is caritow, from “to grace, to endue with special honor, to make accepted, to be highly favored.” The Beloved here is Christ and the level of love here is *agape*, “agape.” God the Father loves Jesus. God the Father loves me as I am “in Christ.” I have been chosen in Christ to be holy and without blame before the Father in love. I have been adopted into the family of God as a child of God; not on any merit of myself, but on the merit of Christ’s obedience in life and death, on the merit of Christ’s paying the penalty for my sin, satisfying the divine justice of God, propitiating the wrath of God, being the means of reconciliation with a holy God, being that sacrifice that God the Father accepts. It is in Christ that I have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7).

Now for anyone who knows deep down where he lives that he is a sinner, unworthy of the love of a holy God/Creator, a worm and no man, dust, and deserving of rejection and the wrath of God, this is good news! My being accepted is not based on anything in me, but is based on God accepting Jesus. Out of the goodness of God's grace, I am accepted in the Beloved. I am loved. I am favored. I have access to the Father. I am able to have all my needs met according to the riches of God's glory, according to the vastness of God's gracious supply. I am not alone in this; but only you can speak about you.

I need acceptance, and I can know that I have it most certainly and why. And it doesn't depend on my being or doing anything but believing and receiving Jesus Christ, giving Him my life for His in the life exchange of the covenant. My needs, whether Maslow's list or someone else's list that might add the need for adventure, freedom, expansion, expression, power, and exchange, are met in Christ, in this most favorable position in which I find myself in Christ. I was dead in trespasses and sin; but now am I alive, clothed with the righteousness of Christ. This defeats what Satan might throw at me to cause me to wallow in the mire of rejection, feeling powerless, feeling like a victim, a prisoner, going nowhere.

Believers are in an "already and not yet" tension. We have been accepted and we are becoming acceptable. In this "already accepted" position, we have security; we are safe. We do not need to try to ingratiate ourselves to God or try to earn God's acceptance on some conditional basis. We don't need to tolerate anything that comes along just to be pleasing and have someone say we're "okay." We can risk being vulnerable and love others, not because we need them, but because our needs are met by God and we love because we want to give to others, not take from them.

If we feel we are never good enough, then we must know that in Christ we have received His perfection. (Colossians 2:10-15) Jesus succeeded; our success is in Him. (Romans 8; 2 Corinthians 5:17) Understanding this gives us a boldness and confidence. (1 John 4:17; Hebrews 13:6; Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 10:19ff; Ephesians 3:12, e.g.) We can approach the Father, who is holy, knowing we are accepted. We can then seek the Lord to discover what we are meant to do in life. (Romans 12:2; 1 Thess. 4:5, 18; Colossians 3:17; 2 Timothy 2.15, e.g.)

As we understand how the gospel applies to us, as we get back to the basics of what Jesus accomplished on our behalf and what it means to us spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically, etc., we can move out from our own position of being accepted in the Beloved to meeting the needs of others.

Over the years I have added to my mother's "three A's." My list includes: acceptance, approval, appreciation, acknowledgment, affection, attention, admiration, and awe. God wants this from us, though He doesn't need it from us. We move out of need to God. God wants us to demonstrate that He has met our need for acceptance by giving to Him and others "the A list." Think about it.

Serving the Lord of Glory,

Mary Craig

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Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus

Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:17-19

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