

## “... Practicing Acceptance...”

It's part of our Mission Statement: “We are a vibrant spiritual community, awakening to God, **practicing acceptance**, transforming lives.” We say these words... and we mean these words. But sometimes it's a challenge to **live** these words. Let's take a few minutes to give this some thought.

At the risk of seeming simplistic, I'd like to look at each of these words separately, trying to figure out just what they mean. A good definition of “practicing” can be found on the internet, at Dictionary.com: “actively following a specific way of life, religion, philosophy, etc.” So we know it's **active**, and not just an occasional activity, but a **way of life**.

How about “acceptance”? First, we see that “acceptance” is the **act** of accepting.” Again, it's **active**; but we need to know more to really understand the word. In the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, we find that “to accept” is “to receive willingly,” or “to recognize as true.”

So if we are **practicing acceptance**, we are actively following a way of life, willingly receiving people into our hearts and lives, and recognizing something in them that is “true.” That's more powerful than we might have imagined those two words to be!

How often have you heard that, before we can truly love (or accept) others, we must be able to love (and accept) ourselves? I'm not sure that I totally agree. Maybe we're learning to do both at the same time. I do believe that the more fully we love ourselves, the more fully and deeply we find we can love others. The more willing we are to accept our own quirks, mistakes and shortcomings, the easier it is to accept--“to willingly receive”--the quirks, mistakes and shortcomings of others.

Just about the time we think we can handle this pretty well, we are challenged to accept and love people who are **different** from us, people who don't act, live or believe the way we do. How do we do that? How can we “willingly receive” and love people who are so different from us? Again, it's something we **learn** to do. As we learn that to love ourselves is to love the Spirit within us, we also learn that the Spirit in us is the same Spirit that is within every human being. Even if it's hard to see it at first, at heart, in our essence, in our true selves, there is **no difference**. This is what we “recognize as true” when we practice acceptance. As we learn from the Fillmores and Joel Goldsmith and so many other teachers, we are One. We are One with God, we are One with each other, we are even One within ourselves, incorporating all those different “selves” that we see and experience at one time or another.

There's a blessing we've used over the years in Unity that says, “We love you, we bless you, we appreciate you, and we accept the Christ in you.” More recently, as we are learning that the Christ **in** us is actually the Christ **as** us (as Jesus said, “The Father and I **are one**...”), we've changed the end of that blessing to say, “...we accept the Christ **as** you.” As we are challenged to practice acceptance, to willingly receive ourselves and others at a heart level, maybe this blessing could be useful as an affirmation. “I love you, I bless you, I appreciate you, and I accept the Christ as you.”

Lorraine M. Zinn, 5-30-2011