



Icebreaker



- What's the funniest or most embarrassing thing you've done to impress someone?
- Have you ever felt like an imposter in a situation? How did you handle it?



Discussion Questions



- We often seek approval in different areas of life. Where do you find yourself most tempted to seek approval from others?
- In Matthew 3:17, God declares His approval over Jesus before He even begins His ministry. What does this tell us about God's approval versus human approval?
- How does the idea that we are already approved by God challenge the way you see yourself?
- The more we let rejection resound in our hearts, the more it rules our lives. Have you ever experienced this? How did it affect your faith?
- How can we practically shift our mindset from striving for approval to living from God's approval?
- John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. Who has played a role in preparing the way for you spiritually?
- Jesus' baptism symbolized stepping into a new identity. What does stepping into your identity in Christ look like for you right now?
- A "self-centered gospel" says we must earn God's approval. How have you seen this mindset play out in your life or in the church?
- Rejection can be a painful experience. How does knowing that God fully accepts you bring healing to past rejections?
- God's approval can be described as a "manager's override" over our shortcomings. How does this analogy help you understand grace?



Thought for the Group



In this passage, we explored the deep human longing for approval and how it can shape our identity. Many of us seek validation from others—whether through achievements, relationships, or even religious performance. However, the good news of the Gospel is that we don't have to strive for approval that has already been given to us in Christ.

When Jesus was baptized, God declared from heaven, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). What's crazy about this? Jesus hadn't even started His ministry yet. He hadn't performed miracles or preached sermons. And still, God declared His approval. This tells us something big: God's love and approval aren't based on what we do—they're based on who we are in Him.

This statement wasn't just for Jesus—it was for all who would put their faith in Him. If we are in Christ, then we too are accepted, approved, and deeply loved by the Father.

The enemy tries to trap us in the lie that we must earn our worth. But Jesus' sacrifice on the cross has already secured our approval. Living from this truth means we no longer need to be bound by rejection, insecurity, or fear. Instead, we are free to walk in confidence, knowing we are fully loved and accepted by God.

So the question is—are you living for approval, or are you living from approval?



Next Steps



- This week, take note of moments when you catch yourself striving for validation. Whether it's in work, relationships, or even social media, pause and intentionally surrender that need for approval to God in prayer.
- Each morning, declare Matthew 3:17 over your life: "I am God's beloved child, and He is well pleased with me." Let this truth reshape how you approach your day.