

Approval

How important it is to be liked! Inevitably, someone in every crowd will deny this by saying that they are indifferent to approval from anyone. Yet in reality, even those who deny they want approval will fail to be consistent. At the end of the day, we want approval from at least someone.

Approval Rating is big among political figures. Public opinion is important to the longevity of service among public servants. Therefore they need to be aware of what the public thinks, especially among their constituents. Even politicians who say they never make it a practice of studying the polls can not help but react to some degree by the force of public opinion. As the next presidential election draws nearer, the phrase, "approval rating," will be spoken many times among the nation's media.

It is important to those who serve within the Lord's church to know that what they do is correct and appreciated. Positive reinforcement from those who are being served helps to spur them on to greater service. Though the Bible is sparing with its compliments, some brethren were recipients of positive reinforcement from the Lord. Barnabas was known as the "son of encouragement," Acts 4:36. Phoebe was commended as a servant to the church at Rome, Romans 16:1. There are others as well.

Even when constructive criticism is called for, a reminder of the good a person or group of people do should be first established. Look at the letters of the apostle Paul. Many of the churches who received letters had problems that Paul needed to address, but his approach started with blessings and reinforcements of approval, see 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Colossians 1:1-8. Even problem ridden Corinth had its positive points, 1 Corinthians 1:7; 11:2.

How many homes could be made better if when parents dealt out discipline they would start by reinforcing positive qualities that exist in their child. The same could be said about interaction between husbands and wives, between co-workers, and between brothers and sisters in Christ.

Some may confuse the need for recognition and approval as "sugar coating." Stop and think about it. You can get a lot further with sugar than with salt. If relationships are going to be kept, they are going to need maintaining. A part of maintenance of anything you own demands gentle and kind treatment. This is especially true with something so important as your home, or those with whom you plan to be with in heaven. The Bible says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you," Ephesians 4:32.

Life is too short, and eternity is too long to miss this point. If you feel a lack of approval in your own life, be an approving kind of person to others. Look for things in others to compliment and do not hold back! Tell them! No, your words of kindness are not corny. If you see a person put forth what may be to you a simple effort, be sure to let them know they are doing well. Then when times come that criticism is necessary, they will know you love them and are

seeking what is in their best interest. But in such cases, approaching should be done with great care and kindness.

A common thread that is true among all church members is that those who attend have come to understand that Jesus Christ mends broken lives. The gospel is good news. Do not underestimate the power of good news. God seeks to approve of every person. With the blood of Christ this is made possible. Sin must be exposed, but with kindness. The truth must be preached, but lovingly, Ephesians 4:15. Ignoring sin in a person's life helps nothing. But exposing it in the light of goodness and kindness will provide the greatest possibility for change. The old saying is still true, "Kill'em with kindness!"

—Scott