

The Approval Trap, Mark 11.4-10, 15.29-32, 4.9.27

Introduction

1. Opening Slides:
2. You describe yourself as a “people pleaser.”
3. Are you more interested with how many “friends” you have on social media than you actually have in your life?
4. You will do anything your boss or spouse requests of you, even if it’s unreasonable or puts you under excessive pressure.
5. You try to accommodate people you should stand up to.
6. You don’t speak the truth to a person because you don’t want him/her mad at you.
7. You have trouble saying no to people.
8. You measure your success based on what others think of you.
9. You’ve taken on extra obligations at the request of others, only to feel resentful of them later.
10. You have not gone after your dream of starting a business, being a singer, traveling the world, etc., because someone told you not to.
11. A lot of your free time is taken up fulfilling the needs of others (and rarely the needs of yourself).
12. If you do something that someone doesn’t approve of, you feel very guilty or afraid.

13. Holy Week & Scripture
14. In five days, he is lead into the city with a parade and then he’s marched out of the city to a crucifixion. He’s embraced and then rejected. He’s approved by the crowds on Sunday and then they sentenced him to die on Friday.
 - a. How was Jesus able to fulfill the Father’s will while people’s approval of him was all over the map?
 - b. Appl – it is hard for most of us to sincerely do God’s will when people’s opinions about us are all over the map. We can’t help but wonder, “If I say or do that, what are they going to think of me...how will it affect our relationship... or “
15. Our culture is driven more and more by approval. We have to say, believe and act in the culturally right ways. Get buy-in from the right people. Post the right things so we get a “thumbs up.” We are concerned about the # of followers, likes, reviews, how people perceive us, etc.
 - a. It is causing believers to pause when they should be advancing; to look to see who is crossing the line first or standing up for what is right when the culture says “Sit down.”
 - b. We are becoming more reticent to do what God directs, generally or specifically, b/c we need other’s approval. It is fostering a mediocre and bland Christian life. Where are the people of passion and zeal for the things of God who will do the will of God regardless of the consequences and w/o having an angry spirit?
 - i. We can’t have the “I’ll show you” attitude b/c it is contrary to the spirit of Jesus.

- ii. God desires obedience, which will not be appreciated or accepted by all. God calls us to believe, do and say some unpopular things. Jesus said that we would be persecuted and that the world would hate us. You cannot get around it.

16. Big Idea: Needing the approval of others is a trap that limits your full impact and potential for Jesus.

- a. **You cannot accomplish what God wants in your life as long as you are seeking someone's approval.**
- b. John Bevere wrote, "If you desire the praise of man, you will fear man. If you fear man, you will serve him—for you will serve what you fear."

17. Prov.29.25 – The fear of man will prove to be a snare.

- a. You will be trapped from doing what we are supposed to do. We don't want to incur the disapproval of others, and/or we need their approval to advance.
- b. King Saul – An example of one captured by the fear of man:
 - i. King Saul feared others and led him away from doing God's will – 1 Sam.15.24 – and losing His throne.
 - ii. King Saul feared David's popularity, which caused him to be jealous and eventually led him to try and kill him.

Jesus & Approval

1. Jesus faced massive opposition, rejection and harassment, but he pressed ahead doing the Father's will.
2. At the beginning of His ministry, He experienced:
 - a. Attack of Satan
 - b. Harassment from his family – Mark 3.21. He's crazy.
 - c. False accusations from leaders – Mark 3.22. He's demon possessed.
 - d. Rejection and persecution from his hometown – Luke 4.28-30. They tried to throw him off a cliff.
 - e. **Appl – this type of disapproval would have immobilized some of us; made others angry; redirected us outside God's will; created reservation; left many wounded and unsure. We would have either shrunk in fear or struck back in rage.**
3. During the last week of his life, He experienced:
 - a. Intimidation, threats and false accusations from key leaders
 - b. The abandonment of close friends
 - c. Betrayal of a key follower
 - d. Painful injustice of the judicial system
 - e. Appl – this would have derailed most of us; we would question whether we truly are doing God's will; we would have walked away from God's best b/c of their rejection. We would have said, "I'll just leave; if you don't want me then I'll get out of here;
4. **How Jesus did God's will w/o being driven off course by the opinions of others:**
 - a. He had His Father's approval – Luke 3.22
 - b. He knew He was carrying out His Father's will – John 13.3
 - c. He knew what was inside of man – John 2.24-25. He knew they would approve of him when he did miracles and they would reject Him when He spoke the truth. Even with his disciples, he knew who could be counted on.
5. King Saul knew he was chosen by God to be king; he was serving God's purposes as king; but he was feared the opinions of others and it derailed him. This insecurity led him away from God's best and eventually committed terrible atrocities.

6. You have to be vertically, internally and horizontally in balance. You receive the support of others, but you aren't shaken if they disapprove of you.

When It Is Healthy

1. We need the encouragement and affirmation of others. God made us with emotional needs that can only be met by others; even He can't meet those needs. It is why we need fellowship with other believers. We can build each other up and support one another.
2. Aaron's story of Micah & him encouraging Aaron.

When It Is Unhealthy

1. When we are dependant upon it and we feel incomplete without it. When I have to fish around for a compliment or head nod rather than being content with my Heavenly Father's approval.
2. When I don't feel complete, until you give me your approval.
3. We begin second guessing ourselves when we don't get someone's approval and we find ourselves falling away from the thing we feel like God wants us to do. You back down and either don't do all God wants you to do or maybe not to degree you were supposed to do it.
4. Your mood fluctuates based upon the tide of other people's opinions.

You & Approval

1. **Vertically** - Approval comes from God first. I receive His approval when I put my faith in Jesus. It is not what I do, but it is who I have put my trust in. If you don't, you feel isolated
2. **Internally** – You know that you are doing God's will both generally and specifically. If you don't, it creates instability.
3. **Horizontally** – You have support, encouragement and many times the approval of a few close friends. If not, this creates insecurity. You have to become okay with the fact that sometimes they will stick with you and other times they will abandon you.

Conclusion

1. Big Idea: Needing the approval of others is a trap that limits your full impact and potential for Jesus.
2. 2 Tim.1.7 – For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.
 - a. Context – Paul's last letter; increase of persecution; Paul calls Timothy to stand strong despite the alienation and desertion of others. The fear of man is a trap.