

Holy Spirit's Loving Answer to Your Hunger for Man's Approval

Most days, I struggle to replace myself with God in the center-stage spotlight of my life. Too often I care more for the esteem of man than the fame of God. Stepping off stage and allowing God to stand in my place can be a daily, sometimes hourly, battle. Maybe it is for you too.

The desire to be affirmed spills into just about any part of my life where my performance is on the line. After speaking at events, I used to want to linger in front of the stage, pretending to check email on my phone so I could hear the audience's thoughts on my message. I wanted to know if they were challenged, if they would apply the truth I tried to speak into their lives. At least that's what I told myself.

But if I really examined the intentions of my heart, I was more concerned with whether they liked me. And only if the answer was yes did I feel as if I'd achieved success. Everything about the talk could have been perfect. But their opinion about my performance dictated how I felt about my job. I masked people pleasing, which was at my core, with wanting to know if they were closer to Jesus.

My audience was not an audience of One, but an audience of everyone.

When I desire to have others affirm my work more than I desire the affirmation of God, it keeps me center-stage of my life and God backstage. And I'm yoked to the approval of man instead of the fame of God.

Love Me, Need Me, Want Me

Maybe, like me, you need affirmation to feel valued: at work, at school, as a friend, as a wife, as a mom, with your body or in your relationships. Perhaps you get a burst of happiness when you get an “attagirl” from your boss, “you’re so giving” from the place you volunteer or “your house is beautiful” from a neighbor. But if we make the esteem of man our true north, we’ll find ourselves lost at sea when the “Wow, look at you!” wears off.

Logically, we know if people don’t approve of us, it’s their fault, not ours. I’ve impressed this upon my boys when they tell me some kid said something mean and made them feel “less than.”

“If they don’t like you, that’s their fault,” I say. “They’re just missing out on how awesome you are.” But somehow I don’t apply my own advice to myself. If I’m not accepted by whomever I’m trying to collect acceptance from, I too feel “less than.”

When we perform for an audience of “everyone”, they always want something. We can’t simply walk onstage and assume we have their acceptance. Just like a musician at a concert can’t step onstage and simply stand there. She has fans who purchased tickets and so she is expected to perform.

It seems many of our relationships on earth—friendships, our relationships with our bosses, maybe even our marital relationships—are the same way. In most of our relationships we give to get. Unless you’re a good friend of mine or a family member, you probably read this not because you wanted to show me love but because you wanted something for yourself. I will only get your applause if you like what I have to say. On the other hand, if this article impacts you, you’ll tell people about it. In other words, you’ll applaud me.

There’s no shame living in an “if you, then I” world, right?

It's the way we are wired. Why would I buy something that's not going to benefit me in some way? But unlike people in my life, were I to walk onstage, God's heart would burst with affection for me before I broke the curtain line. Not because of what I've said or done, but because I'm His. He's not waiting for any great performance. I don't have to do anything to receive His love and acceptance. So why do I pursue the applause of someone who wants me to give them something instead of the applause of Someone who's given everything to me? Why do I crave man's applause over God's?

The Lord's desire for us is to be confident in Him. To be confident in His unconditional love. So much so that we don't need anyone else's applause.

*Excerpt from Chasing Famous: Living the Life You've Always Auditioned For by **Lisa Lloyd**, an actress, speaker and author.*