

# AAA MEMBERSHIP

(Colossians 1:10)

## Many of us have an unacknowledged addiction to the approval of others

### SYMPTOMS

Why is it we often respond so strongly to criticism? I believe it reveals a serious addiction in many of us. This addiction has nothing to do with chemical dependency or substance abuse. There are no twelve-step groups to help people fight it, nor any Betty Ford treatment centers in which to detoxify. I refer to what might be called “approval addiction.” Some people live in bondage to what others think of them. The addiction takes many forms. If we find ourselves often getting hurt by what others say about us, by people expressing other than glowing opinions about us, we probably have it. If we habitually compare ourselves with other people, if we find ourselves getting competitive in the most ordinary situations, we probably have it. If we live with a nagging sense that we aren’t important enough or special enough, or we get envious of another’s success, we probably have it. If we keep trying to impress important people, we probably have it. If we are worried that someone might think ill of us should he or she find out we are an approval addict, we probably are. (John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*)

I do not know whether anyone has ever succeeded in not enjoying praise. And if he enjoys it, he naturally wants to receive it. And if he wants to receive it, he cannot help being pained and distraught at losing it. (John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 347-407)

### CONSEQUENCES

- We’ll remain a prisoner

If you’re wondering what happens if you attach your self-worth to your art or your product and people love it, let me answer that from personal and professional experience. You’re in even deeper trouble. Everything shame needs to hijack and control your life is in place. You’ve handed over your self-worth to what people think. It’s panned out a couple of times, but now it feels a lot like Hotel California: You can check in, but you can never leave. You’re officially a prisoner of “pleasing, performing, and perfecting.” (Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*)

- We’ll have difficulty hearing God

Frederick B. Meyer writes, “So long as there is some thought of personal advantage, some idea of acquiring the praise and commendation of men, some aim of self-aggrandizement, it will be simply impossible to find out God’s purpose concerning us.” Nothing will go right in our effort to hear God if this false motivation is its foundation. God will not cooperate. We must discover a different motivation for knowing God’s will and listening to his voice. (Dallas Willard, *Hearing God*)

- We’ll become restless and wallow in our rejection

When we have sold our identity to the judges of this world, we are bound to become restless, because of a growing need for affirmation and praise. Indeed, we are tempted to become low-

hearted because of a constant self-rejection. And we are in serious danger of becoming isolated, since friendship and love are impossible without a mutual vulnerability. (Henri Nouwen, *Out of Solitude*)

## TREATMENT

*Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects.... (Colossians 1:10)*

The child who is patted on the back for doing a lesson well, the woman whose beauty is praised by her lover, the saved soul to whom Christ says, 'Well done,' are pleased and ought to be. For here the pleasure lies. . .in the fact that you have pleased someone you wanted (and rightly wanted) to please. (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)

*I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. <sup>4</sup>My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. (1Cor 4:3-4)*

Psychiatrist David Burns notes that it is not another person's compliment or approval that makes us feel good; rather, it is our belief that there is validity to the compliment.... We are not the passive victim of others' opinions. Their opinions are powerless until we validate them. No one's approval will affect us unless we grant it credibility and status. The same holds true for disapproval. (John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*)

## REHAB

1. Get a Grip

2. Be Discerning

Lord, teach us to care and not to care. (T.S. Eliot, "Ash Wednesday," *Collected Poems: 1909-1962*)

3. Know Who Matters

Only accept and pay attention to feedback from people who are also in the arena.... I carry a small sheet of paper in my wallet that has written on it the names of people whose opinions of me matter. To be on that list, you have to love me for my strengths and struggles. (Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*)

4. Eliminate "Impression Management"

5. Discover *Your* Resources

## APP: leaders

God rarely uses a person whose main concern is what others are thinking. (Andy Andrews, *The Traveler's Gift*)