

# Living for an Audience of One

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Posted by admin

It hit hard and it hit home. It opened my mind to a whole new way of thinking about ministry and motives. In the NIV John 5:41 reads, "I do not accept praise from men." In the NLT it reads, "Your approval or disapproval means nothing to me." I knew the minute I read it that it would have a profound effect on what drives me to do what I do in God's kingdom. Paul alludes to the same truth in Galatians 1:10, NLT; "Obviously, I'm not trying to be a people pleaser! No, I am trying to please God. If I were still trying to please people, I would not be Christ's servant."

As I reflected on John 5:41 that morning a few years ago and continue to reflect on it's truth today, I realize that for me it is a paradigm altering concept for me to get hold of. Who is my audience? Is it God and God alone or is it people, whether few or many? I think most leaders do things with an eye to the approval of some audience or other. I have a renewed desire in my heart to shift my awareness of "audiences" to the point where I live, and minister for an audience of One. I want to experience God in such a way that I can truly say that people's approval or disapproval means nothing to me. At times, I still live in fear of what people say and think; whether I am accepted or approved by people in "my audiences." It is slavery, bondage. Not what God intended when he bought my freedom on the cross.

As I was meditating on that verse in the NLT, I had thoughts like: Wow, that would be a place to be. Oh, to experience more regularly the freedom and joy of not being a yo-yo, constantly up and down as it relates to how people are responding to me. My experience has been that when people approve of me, I tend to feel elevated and good about myself. On the other hand, when people criticize me, I feel very fearful and question my identity in Christ. Oh, to be consistently secure in You, Lord Jesus, that I am not moved up or down by people's perception or comments about me, but receive anything and everything and stay unaffected. Maybe it is wishful thinking due to the fall, my sinful nature and living on this side of heaven, but nonetheless there is something in me that wants to learn how to daily live for an audience of one.

Bill Cosby said, "I don't know what the secret to success is, but I do know what the secret to failure is, and that's trying to keep every body happy." I wholeheartedly agree. I truly and only need to be concerned about one person's view of me.

Winston Churchill remarked in 1941 in a speech in the House of Commons, "Nothing is more dangerous than to live in the temperamental atmosphere of a Gallup Poll—always feeling one's pulse and taking one's temperature."

Churchill describes a nineteenth-century Christian soldier, General Charles Gordon, as, "a man careless alike of the frowns of men or the smiles of women, or life or comfort, wealth or fame." In describing himself, General Gordon said, "The more one feels, in

order to keep from shipwreck, the necessity of steering by the Polar Star, i.e. in a word leave to God alone, and never pay attention to the favors or smiles of man; if He smiles on you, neither the smile or frown of men can affect you.” After he died, John Bonar, a Scottish friend, wrote to Gordon’s brother, “What at once and always struck me was the way in which his oneness with God ruled all his actions, and his mode of seeing things. I never knew one who seemed so much to ‘endure as seeing Him who is invisible.’ He seemed to live with God and for God.”

That’s it. That is, I believe, exactly what Jesus was getting at in John 5:41 and what made his life and attitude so refreshingly different. This “living for an audience of one” was the secret to the boldness and fearlessness of the first Christ-followers we read about in the book of Acts. I want to get to the place where, before others, I have nothing to prove, nothing to gain, and nothing to lose. As I read of great men and women of God they live as if they had an internal a gyroscope not a Gallup poll that directed them I wonder how far Moses, Abraham, Noah would have gotten if they had taken polls before moving out or speaking out.

Here’s what I’m learning about living for an audience of one:

1. It is a long process in experiencing change of this magnitude
2. I am still insecure and spend too much time worrying about what people think
3. I need to experience God’s love and acceptance of me more fully and more consistently
4. The key to seeing change is spending more secret time with him and being honest about where I am and what I am thinking and feeling
5. It is important for me to immediately confess “audience switching” when I am aware of it

How are you doing? Which “audience” is your focus on most of the time?