

**Joke:** Did you ever hear of Juan the Magnificent?

Juan was just a young man growing up in rural Mexico. He always felt he had little chance to grow up and do anything of importance or recognition. He figured he would grow up and work the land. The same as his father and his grandfather before him.

And then one day he saw the great magician Harry Houdini.

Young Juan knew his destiny.

Juan slowly learned the art of magic. First pleasing friends and family with simple sleight of hand, as he grew older he began entertaining patrons at local bars with illusions and escapology.

By the time he was 20 he had toured through all of Mexico. His fame in his home country soon brought a talent scout from America seeking him out.

Before he knew it, Juan the magnificent was on a whirlwind tour of the US, Europe and more he was treading the very same boards that his inspiration Harry Houdini once stood upon.

But as Juan reached the mid point of his life, he saw dwindling numbers in his audience. The cheers were not so loud and his fame had begun to fade.

Juan needed a new trick.

The next great trick.

It would be his greatest achievement. His crowning glory. His final act. The one they would speak about for generations to come.

As Juan passed his 63rd birthday, the stage was set. The final performance of the legendary Juan the Magnificent. One night only.

The theatre was sold out. People stood in the aisles and sat upon the floors eager to see his last performance.

The lights dimmed, the orchestra began to play. The curtains opened slowly revealing Juan the Magnificent. He stood in the middle of the stage, dressed in the finest black silk three piece suit, top hat upon his head.

The stage lights came up, and with a dramatic flourish Juan the Magnificent swept his hat off his head and stood, arms outstretched as the crowd roared with delight.

Juan the Magnificent stood and basked in the warmth their cheers gave him. As the cheers softened and eventually quieted, Juan the Magnificent took a grateful bow.

Juan the Magnificent, straightened. Placed his hat back upon his head and cried out

"UNO! DOS!"

And then he vanished without a trace.

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"Altar Ego" - "My Longing for Approval"

Today I'm wrapping up our series, "Altar Ego", based on the book "Altar Ego, Becoming Who God Says You Are." By Craig Groeshel.

My goal in this series was to take a characteristic, an area of your life that maybe you still struggle with, something that we think about ourselves, and to lay it down so we can become, not who we think we are, but rather who God says we are

In week one, we laid down our feelings of inadequacy. So many of us, struggle with those feelings. I know I have and sometimes find myself still doing so.

Week two, we laid down our need for control. Rather it be our control of people, or circumstances. How many know you can't control either one of those. We can and should control our actions or reactions, but you cannot control others. And as far circumstances some things are simply out of our control. So, we do what we can and let God do what He does and just trust Him to work out those things we can't.

Last week we laid down our right to be offended. We will have so many opportunities to be offended. Jesus said, it's impossible to not have them, but instead of walking around offended and bitter, we forgive because Christ has forgiven us.

Today, we're going to lay down our longing for approval; let's be honest we all love to be loved. We all want to be liked.

The reality is if I'm being honest, I still today struggle with having the longing for the approval of others. As a child I wanted my dad to be proud of me. So, I performed hoping he would be more pleased. Thinking, If I do good, he'll approve of me. And the truth is he had told me he was

already without a performance.

And the problem is that warped view of doing to be approved by others, sometimes is how we view our Heavenly Father as well. Listen your heavenly Papa is already pleased you are righteous because of what Jesus did. As a mentioned last week you are righteous by a new birth not behavior.

And hear this church I'm not saying that behavior shouldn't change, I'm saying it will change because of the transformative power of God's grace. Transformation not just behavior modification. And His grace enables us to say no to sin.

Listen if you have truly given your life to Christ there is nothing unrighteous about you in His sight. He says you are holy, and blameless in His sight. That means what He is looking at is holy, blameless, and above reproach.

That means instead of feeling kind of close, somewhat accepted, and I have a lot to work on I have an idea instead of trying the behavior modification route, why don't you just start believing who God says you are and let that change what your working on.

See if God changes your identity and He changes who you see yourself to be and you've got nothing to prove because you've become. You'd be amazed at all the things that you think are vices that would go away.

Colossians 1:21–22 (NLT): This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. 22 Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own

presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.

So, today I want to give you five specific signs that you may be living for the approval of others.

The first one, if you're taking notes, you occasionally or may even often worry about what others think.

Maybe you post something on your social media account and then you go back like 10 seconds later to find out if anyone gave you the thumbs up, or heart on the post.

"Did anybody like this? Did anybody comment?" "Hope somebody commented on my selfy?" We're consumed with what other people think.

I know none of you ever do that.

But why do we do that? Because there's this, "What are they going to think?"

I remember one time going into work and my hair was less than stellar, I had washed it as I do every morning, but this particular morning I didn't comb it like usual. As a matter of fact I didn't comb it at all. I got busy doing other things and it just slipped my mind. It looks like I had helmet on for days then decided to take it off.

And so, hi ho, hi ho, it's off to work I go. And how long did it take for someone to say what's up with the hair. It might have been an hour but to me it was like great everyone say this helmet head.

Do you know what I did? I said oh just trying something new,

like it? No, I didn't do that. I went to the restroom looked in the mirror. Thought how could I have not noticed this mat. Worse yet my wife let me walk out like this. And proceeded to wet my hair again and tried to get it to look somewhat normal.

Why? Because I cared too much about what someone thought.

I'm not saying you shouldn't look good, but sometimes and this is point number two is that we are often overly sensitive.

I can be that way. I could hear most of you say "Hey, pastor, great message." And one person says something negative and I just zoom in on that one thing. And my mind goes to thinking, Oh, I didn't make a difference at all. Everyone else said you preached it today pastor, but that one person and I get overly sensitive and focus on that one thing.

Or you call a friend but they were busy and said they will call back later and what happens, they never call. Doesn't that just tick you off? Or you text a friend and they don't text you back. And you start thinking, Oh, my gosh, did I say something wrong? Are we not B.F.F's anymore?

And then you start to find yourself being overly sensitive.

Let me let you in on a little secret maybe they just got busy and forgot. I know you spiritual giants have never done that. But I know I have.

A third indicator that perhaps you are living for the approval of others is that you compromise your values.

There's something you believe deeply in, but you compromise it for the approval of others.

You're a young girl and you love God and you want to honor God and save yourself for your husband. But you're dating a guy and he says, "I love you, baby. I'd love you even more if. . .And so what happens? You compromise your values for the approval of someone else.

Or you're a guy and you're hanging out with the guys and they're all telling crude jokes. And you know they're not really honoring to God, but you play along, and join in.

Or you use language that is no different than theirs. Because, hey, you want to just fit in, you don't want to be that religious guy. And so, you compromise your values.

Some people in their finances compromise to impress people. I love what Will Smith once said. . .

He said, "Too many people are buying things they can't afford, with money that they don't have. . .to impress people that they don't like!"

You compromise your values because you want people to like you based on what you have or what you look like.

Another indicator, and this is a big one, but another indicator that you're longing for the approval of others is that you hesitate sharing your faith.

You really believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that he transforms lives and forgives sins and makes us new.

And you've got a friend who doesn't know that, a friend who's maybe hurting and lost and needs to know about the Savior who could help him.

And you want to share the goodness of God with your friend but you don't want to be that "religious freak" that he's talked about before.

And so, you don't share your faith.

And listen I'm not saying that's always the case but I do believe that sometimes it's because we are so concerned what others will think about me if I do share my faith. That we simply choose not to.

And that's probably even more true in our anti-Christian culture today.

I had to get new upper and lower CF joints on my truck and I found a place that could do it before I go to Pennsylvania to see Cora this week. I looked up reviews for the business they had almost all 5 star reviews. They had one one star and that was from someone that never even used their business. One star want to know why? Here's what the review said. . .

"Their preachy political sign out front is off putting. The message doesn't make me want to patronize the business. Please reconsider the sentiment you are portraying to potential customers."

By the way the sign has never been political. It's said things like Jesus loves you. God cares about you. Do you know the author of the Bible? Things like that. This week on

their sign it says live your life like Jesus is coming back at anytime.

That's not political, that's the gospel.

**(Talk about how he lived up to what the sign read as well)**

Finally, and this is another biggie, you might be longing for approval if you have a hard time saying "No."

Someone asks you, "Hey, can you do this, and inwardly you're screaming, "No, I'm busy. I'm overwhelmed. I don't have the time."

You scream it inwardly, but outwardly you go, "Sure, I'd be happy to."

And you have this horrible sense of guilt because outwardly, you're agreeable, but inwardly, you're resentful. You have an incredibly hard time saying no because you want to please people.

Why do we do that? The reason is because and this is the cousin of the thing we looked at in our first week in this series which was our feeling of inadequacy. . .,but we do it because, and again it's not always the case but we do it because we feel insecure. We're crying out, "Like me. Like me. Make me feel good about myself."

But if we're not careful, we're going to miss one of the most powerful truths and biggest dangers about being a people pleaser and that is this.

Becoming obsessed with what people think about you is the quickest way to forget what God thinks about you.

That's good preaching pastor, let me say it again, becoming obsessed with what people think about you is the quickest way to forget what God thinks about you.

Proverbs 29:25 (NIV): Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.

Fear of man will prove to be a what? It will prove to be a snare or a trap, but whoever trusts in who? But whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.

Fear of man -- What will they think? What is their opinion of me?

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, a trap.

The Hebrew word translated as "snare" is the word mokesheh. And as the verse says it means a trap, a snare.

It literally was the hook that people would use to put inside an animal's nose to pull the animal around.

It's the mokesheh; it's the snare.

It's the -- "Hey, do you like my outfit?" "Do you like my hair?" "Hey, do you like my car?" "Look at me I've got an iPhone 15 with an unlimited data plan?" "Am I cool now?" "I just got another like on my Facebook post." "I just had another subscriber on YouTube."

Fear of man proves to be a what? A snare.

It's a trap. But whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.

And here's the problem pleasing people it's like idolatry. It's putting the approval of people ahead of the opinion of God.

It's making people too big in our lives and God too small.

In fact, I would say this to you. It could be one of the greatest limiting factors in your life.

If you're a parent, and your ultimate goal is, I want my kids to like me, they may like you today but they're not going to respect you tomorrow. Because your number one call is not to be their buddies but to be their guiding force in their life. To train up a child in the way they should go.

If you want to be a leader in your school, and you're consumed with what your friends think about you, you can't lead them, because you're following them.

Listen God's Word never changes, and what it says is not always popular. Jesus spoke some things, did some things that some didn't care for. You can't compromise the Word to have the applause of people. You can certainly share it better than some have, but never compromise to get the approval of men. That's a snare.

If you want to be a follower of Jesus, you cannot be consumed with what people think about you because you cannot simultaneously live for the approval of people and the approval of God.

Becoming obsessed with what people think about you is the fastest way to forget what God thinks about you.

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord will be kept safe.

So, how do we overcome this disease to please?

Let me give you two thoughts as I try to wrap up my message today.

The first thing: And this will probably be obvious but we focus on pleasing God instead of pleasing people. It's that simple.

We want to live not for the crowd, but for an audience of one, who is the one? The Lord.

Galatians 1:10 (NLT): Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.

Let me read that once more from The Passion Translation. . .

Galatians 1:10 (TPT): I'm obviously not trying to flatter you or water down my message to be popular with men, but my supreme passion is to please God. For if all I attempt to do is please people, I would not be the true servant of the Messiah.

Paul said, Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of who? People. He went on to say, if pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant. Don't miss that.

You cannot simultaneously live for the applause of a crowd and live for an audience of one. We need to focus on pleasing God instead of pleasing people.

Let me share something revolutionary with you, You cannot please all people?

Oh, you can try but you will get exhausted doing so.

You'll wear a certain outfit that this group likes but the other crowd can't stand it. You'll listen to music that this group likes but that other group thinks your taste in music is horrible. And even in your morals, you'll live in such a way that this group likes but that group can't stand.

Even in the Body of Christ, we have some that like the music, and the worship to be done a certain way, but others tell us we are doing it all wrong. The song was too long, whatever.

And I realized something that totally transformed and freed me. You do know the truth will set you free, right? What I realized is that I cannot please everybody, but I can please God.

Listen I'm not willing to set myself on fire to keep everyone warm. There is no way.

Obviously, Paul says, I'm not trying to be a people pleaser. If I was trying to please people, I couldn't be Christ's servant.

I will focus on living for an audience of one instead of the applause of the crowd. Because becoming obsessed with what people think about me is the quickest way to forget what God thinks about me.

The second thing that we're going to do is this.

We're going to live from the approval of God instead of for the approval of people. And church that is life transforming when you understand that.

We're going to live from the approval of God. Notice I said, from not for. . .

If you are a follower of Jesus, God through Christ; already approves of you. You live from the approval of God instead of for the approval of people.

Paul said it this way in 1 Thessalonians 2:4.

1 Thessalonians 2:4–6 (NLT): For we speak as messengers approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He alone examines the motives of our hearts. 5 Never once did we try to win you with flattery, as you well know. And God is our witness that we were not pretending to be your friends just to get your money! 6 As for human praise, we have never sought it from you or anyone else.

We speak as messengers approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News.

Jesus came to the earth to seek and save the lost. He became sin for us, died on the cross on our behalf. And on the third day, was raised from the dead. Anyone who believes in him and calls upon his name will be saved. And new life in Christ is available to all that will trust in Him.

That's the gospel, and God trusts you with that message.

If you're a follower of Jesus, you are approved by God and you are entrusted with the message of the gospel. And if you care what people think, you just might be too intimidated to share that message.

And listen church, If you truly follow Jesus, you will not be liked by everyone. I'll go do far to say this, if you're liked by all people, you probably are not truly following Jesus.

You just might get the one star review because they don't like your sign out front.

You're approved by God, and entrusted with the gospel.

He goes on to say, We are not trying to please, who? He said, We're not trying to please people but God He alone examines the motives of our hearts.

The bottom line is this. When we understand this, for those of you that are followers of Jesus, because of what Christ did, you are the righteousness of God. When God looks at you, he doesn't see your sinfulness; he sees the righteousness of Christ.

So, because of what Christ did, my worth is not based on what people think about me. My worth is based on what God says about me.

Somebody needs to hear this. Your worth is not based on what other people think about you. Your worth is based on what God says about you.

So, because of that you don't have to dance for the approval of others, but you're living from the approval of God.

And when you understand that, when somebody says your a loser, stupid, whatever it is they say that contradicts what God says about you. You can laugh it off, because we know that God says you are without fault.

Don't let it bother you. Your special, your a Kings kid.

My Heavenly Papa says, I'm special, so my worth is not based on what you think but on what my Daddy says.

And so the big question is, Who does God say you are? I've already given you a few things that God says about you.

But let me share a few more 2 Corinthians 5:17 says. . .

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV): Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

You are a new creation in Christ Jesus. The old is gone and the new has come.

Because of Christ, you are new. You're not just improved; you are new. The old is gone and the new has come.

Your nature has changed, your heart has changed. You are new.

Another thing God says about you. . .

Ephesians 1:7 (NLT): He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.

You are forgiven.

No matter what you've done and no matter how dirty you feel, and no matter how much the enemy says, You're used goods and you'll never make a difference and because of your past, you can't be used.

God says, because of my Son, because of what Jesus did, you can.

He says, Your sins are gone and I remember them no more.

Need some more. . .

Romans 8:37 (NIV): No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

You're not just a conqueror but you are more than a conqueror through Christ.

I'm not done yet. . .

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT): For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Your what? You are God's masterpiece and you have everything you need to do everything God calls you to do.

Matthew 5:14 (NLT): 14 "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.

In this dark, sinful, fallen place if you have Christ dwelling inside of you, you are the light.

You let it shine; that's what you do. Because that's who you are. You are the light of the world; that's who God says you are. And when you know who you are, you will know what to do.

Romans 8:11 (NIV): And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

There is power living inside of you. You have the same Spirit living in you that lives in Christ.

Romans 8:17 (NLT): And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

You inherit what Christ inherits. You His kid. You will inherit the Holy Spirit of God, the Kingdom of God there yours because you are an heir of the King of Kings. You are special, not because of what you've done, but because you are joined with Christ who did it for you.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (TPT): We are ambassadors of the Anointed One who carry the message of Christ to the world, as though God were tenderly pleading with them directly through our lips. So we tenderly plead with you on Christ's behalf, "Turn back to God and be reconciled to him."

What is an ambassador? It's the highest ranking diplomat sent from one country to another.

You want to know who you are? You are the highest ranking representative sent from heaven to earth to declare the glory of God in this world.

You may say, I just work in a factory. Well then, you're an undercover agent at that factory. You're God's undercover agent in your math class at your high school.

You are his ambassador; that's who He says you are.

And Paul continues. . .

2 Corinthians 5:21 (TPT): For God made the only one who did not know sin to become sin for us, so that we who did not know righteousness might become the righteousness of God

through our union with him.

You are the righteousness of God in Christ. You're not a sinner saved by grace, you are a new creation a saint who sometimes sins. The righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 1:7 (NLT): 7 I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Did you catch that. . .you are loved by God. His own holy people.

It doesn't matter what you think; it matters what God says.

And God says, "You're called". God says, "You're equipped." God says, "You're an overcomer." God says, "You're loved." God says, "You're righteous." And when you realize that you're not living for the approval of others but you're living from the approval of God, that changes everything.

Romans 12:2 (NIV): Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

In other words, don't be like everybody else. Don't be conformed but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

I love Romans 12:2 but a lot of people forget Romans 12:1. Romans 12:1 makes Romans 12:2 possible. What does Romans 12:1 say?

Romans 12:1 (NIV): Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Paul said, I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live. It is no longer I who lives but it's Christ who lives in me. And so in view of God's mercy, I will offer myself as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. That is my spiritual act of worship.

In other words, ultimately it's not about me. It doesn't matter what others think about me; it matters what God says about me. The quickest way to forget what God thinks about me is to be obsessed with what others think about me.

Therefore, I will lay down what you say about me; I'll even lay down what I think about me so I can become who and what God says about me.

Because ultimately, I can't please everybody but the good news is by faith and through Christ I can please God, and so can you, and that's what it's time to do.

Let's pray.

Father, let your Holy Spirit do a work in us. God, it's so easy for us to become a people pleaser. Help us to be one who lives for and you alone.

Papa, I pray that we would be empowered with your truth, of who you say we are. Help us to see we don't need the approval of people because we already have your approval.

God, help us to live for you and you alone, bringing you glory,  
in everything we do.

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