



LISTENING TO PRAISE

As we learn to grow in listening, we need to learn how to listen well to compliments. God can use praise and encouragement from others to spur us on in our work. But praise can also puff us up with pride, turn us away from depending on God, and poison our leadership.

One of our board members once commented that they had seen that facilitators often go bad after five years of being facilitators because they become puffed up from constant praise. This has not been the trend within Reconciled World, but we should be mindful of this risk.

Imagine you are holding a beautiful piece of artwork made by a famous artist and someone says, 'Wow, that is the most beautiful piece of art! You are incredibly talented. I am so impressed.' What would a normal response be?

It would make sense in this moment to appreciate the beauty of the art you are holding, and enjoy it together. But it would not make sense to take credit for the beauty because you are not the artist. A normal response might be, 'Isn't it beautiful? I love the way the colors blend together. It was made by Picasso.'

Similarly, we have been asked to carry beautiful gifts. Each of us has the Holy Spirit and His gifts flowing out of us. As we walk in these gifts, people will recognize them and comment on them. We can appreciate what God is doing and be happy with the transformation we are seeing around us. But we should not take credit for what God is doing, either in our outward response or in our thoughts. We need to regularly remind ourselves that any good fruit comes because we are connected to the Vine and that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:1-5).

A great way to do this is through regular practices of thankfulness and worship to God. Charles Stanley said, 'Every compliment that graces our ears should ultimately rebound to our heavenly Father.'



Devotional Study

AUGUST

Listening to Praise

1) Praise is not bad. In fact, encouragement is a spiritual gift (Romans 12:8). What is the difference between allowing praise to encourage us in godly ways and being puffed up with pride? What can we do to make sure praise does not lead to pride?

2) Allistair Begg once said, "Compliments are like perfume: ok to sniff, but deadly to drink." What do you think this means? Most of us receive praise for doing a good training or preaching an impactful sermon. How do you deal with compliments?

3) Proverbs 27:21 says, 'As the refining pot for silver and the furnace for gold, so is a man tried by praise.' What does this verse mean? How does praise work to purify or test us?

4) Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-7 and Philippians 2:12-13. What can we learn from these passages about how to respond to praise?

5) Why does it matter how we respond to praise? What could happen if we respond poorly?

6) How do we give praise in a way that does not puff others up?

7) Every good and perfect gift comes from above (James 1:17). Take time to thank God for all the gifts of His Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit that live in you. Think of ways those gifts have born fruit and thank God for that. Think of specific things people have praised you for. Turn that into worship to God. Do the same practice with RW as a whole. Let's be an organization that gives all credit to God for the good things He does through us!