Contemporary Comments on the Adult Sabbath School Lesson

[Title] The Two Covenants
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We’ve heard of people being addicted to cigarettes, food, alcohol, video games and a host of other vices. But did you know that some people are addicted to approval?

Author and speaker Joyce Meyer deals with this subject in her book, Approval Addiction: Overcoming the Need to Please Everyone. She writes, “There are two types of approval: one is from people and the other is from God. We want people to approve of us, but if we become addicted to their approval, if we have to have it and are ready to do whatever they demand to get it, we lose our freedom. If we trust God for approval, we are freed from the addiction of approval.”

In the chapter “Bondage or Freedom” she says that there are two ways to live: we can live by grace—which is by God’s mercy, or we can live by works—which is by our own efforts. One is accepting the gift, while the other is trying to earn the gift. One is bondage, while the other is freedom.

According to Pastor Ed Owens of Lansing, Michigan, there are several reasons why we seek approval from others. Fear of loss or abandonment, fear of other’s anger, fear of loneliness, and feelings of guilt are some of the main reasons.

His theory is that the need for approval goes back to our childhood. If we didn’t receive praise or positive attention from our parents, we go through life trying to please “symbolic parents.” We long to hear the words “well done” from a boss, co-worker, friend or spouse. But in the end, people-pleasing is not satisfying. We compromise our own schedules, health, personality and freedom in the process. And it can lead to an addiction of “God-pleasing.”

Paul struggled with the Galatians to help them see that they did not have to work at gaining God’s approval. They didn’t have to follow the letter of the law in order to be “good enough” to be loved and accepted by God, and receive salvation.

Using the story of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, Paul showed them what happens when we don’t trust God’s promise of salvation through Jesus alone, and instead try to achieve salvation ourselves. God promised Abraham that he would have many descendants. But after waiting 10 years, both he and Sarah began to think that perhaps God needed some help to fulfill His own promise. So he had a child with her servant, Hagar. Yet God later blessed them in their old age with His promised plan of Isaac.

Abraham choosing to take Hagar, represents our distrust of God’s promise of free eternal life—how we try on our own to help God fulfill this promise through our good works. In contrast, God’s miraculous gift of a son to Sarah in her old age, represents what can happen if we trust God’s word and receive salvation as a gift. God has never asked us to earn His approval. He only asks us to trust that it’s there, and believe His word.

2. Olive T Church

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