

Kingdom Logic: The Direction of Adoration

Overcoming our belief that we should seek to be adored more than we adore God and others is not easy, because it is so deeply rooted in us. Not only do we need to understand the theology of adoration, we also need some practical advice on everyday behaviors that will help us to implement the transformation. Although there are many practices that could help us (I am sure you could think of many, feel free to share ones you find effective), over the next week we will look at 5 practical behaviors that could help you build others up.

Day One

Stop Multitasking

One of the habits that many of us have that leads us away from the valuing of others, is the practice of doing other things while we try to pay attention to others. One of the places I struggle with this the most is in the foyer after church service, where everyone is leaving, and I often have questions that I need to ask people before they leave. Because there are many people and just a little time, I will often be talking to someone and trying to watch who is leaving so I can catch them before they go. With any multitasking, what we end up doing is giving a little attention to someone while we carry on with our agenda. We all know how much better it makes us feel when someone takes the time and effort to give us their whole attention, yet even though we know how good that makes us feel, we often fail to render this service to others. Think about the times and places, as well as the people, that you often fail to give full attention to, and try to change that this week. One of the multitasking chores that we often do while people are talking is thinking about what we will say when they finish. Once again, this does not give someone the attention that they deserve, and this does not go unnoticed by others. I think this may be the most widespread and least noticed way that we multitask, so see if it applies to you. Join me in trying to stop our multitasking, and if you catch me looking for others while I'm talking to you in the foyer, you have my permission (and my request) to call me out on it, so that I can be a person who practices what he preaches.

Verses: Ecclesiastes 4:6, James 1:8, Luke 10:41, Matthew 6:24

Prayer Topics: Focus, Attention, Undivided, Unity

Day Two

Be Silent

The second way we can work this week to give our attention to others and turn it away from ourselves, and ultimately stop seeking the adoration of others, is to stop talking. This doesn't mean that we should ignore others, in fact just the opposite. What it means is that we should limit our words with others to just what is necessary. Why should we do this and how will it help us in our quest? Most of the time, we have a tendency to value what we say more than what others say. As I wrote about yesterday, we often spend the time we should be listening to others in planning for what we will say, and we often talk more than we listen (This is going to be a hard week for me!). One way of working on this is trying to speak as little as possible. In fact, you can make it a challenge this week to see how little you can speak. What will you do instead? You will see how much time you can spend listening. Rather than have your conversations turn awkward, don't sit in silence but ask short questions to get the other person talking. If you find that you encounter people who talk to the point of your boredom, rather than thinking of them being boring, you could try to figure out why you don't have adequate interest in them and pray that God will help you to find an interest in what they are saying. See how little you can say this week, and also see if you learn anything about yourself or others in the process. When you pray this week, try to spend your prayer time listening, and see what happens. What do we have to lose?

Verses: 1 Peter 3:4, James 1:19, Proverbs 17:28, Proverbs 18:13

Prayer Topics: Quiet, Peace, Interest, Understanding

Day Three

Personalize

One of the best things we can do to start the adoration flowing from us instead of needing it to be flowing to us is to personalize the people we encounter. This seems tautological, but it is surprising how often we interact with people without personalizing them. Most of the time, people are either tools to get what we want, or obstacles in our way. When we drive down the road, when we go to the store, or when we look at social media, people tend to be props or play bit parts in the story of our lives. We hear the latest news about a celebrity and are entertained by it, forgetting that this movie star or singer is a real person with feelings and is loved by God. We see an opinion on social media that we disagree with or are offended by and we see the person who posted it as an enemy, someone to be argued with or used as a prop, because when we argue on social media we are very rarely trying to understand them and convince them but instead we are using our interaction with them to communicate to the social media audience, usually the ones that agree with us. When we talk to the people we see regularly, do we really ask about their lives because we are genuinely interested in them, or do we struggle with what to talk to them about because we lack true interest in them. I find that I must answer many of these questions in a way that does not reflect as positively on me as I would wish, so, I must spend time working on this. Join me, if any of this applies to you, and we will work on this together.

Verses: 1 John 4:8, Philippians 2:3, 1 Corinthians 13:1, Ephesians 4:2

Prayer Topics: Individuals, Goodwill, Forgiveness, Mercy

Day Four

Praise

I can still remember Jim Gardner's voice from the foyer saying, "You're great!". I can probably count on one hand the number of times I have said that to someone. It's not that I haven't given anybody any compliments, though I could stand to be more generous in that area, but just to tell someone they are great doesn't roll off my tongue

the way it did Jim Gardner's. I have told someone they are a great musician, or a great artist, but that's different than telling someone they are great. I can also say with some confidence that I probably have had no more than a couple of people tell me I was great. Thinking about this, it seems like a missed opportunity that we don't spend more time complimenting and praising each other. I know a few people who tell me that they make a point of trying to compliment people regularly, not to be a flatterer, but because they understand the importance of praise to people. Just letting people know you find joy in them seems to be an underrated activity, and one that we could probably all get a little better at. If we decided to do that, we might also have to make some adjustments to the way that we think about people, so that we could say those things with integrity, or maybe if we are already doing that, we would just need to make our thoughts more audible.

Verses: Philippians 4:8, Colossians 4:6, Ephesians 4:29-30

Prayer Topics: Encouragement, Optimism, Generosity

Day Five

Pray

The final thing that occurs to me in changing the direction of our adoration is prayer. Jesus makes it clear to us that when we pray, we should hallow the name of God, or give him glory. Prayer is not just an opportunity to give God our concerns, although doing so does acknowledge our dependence on his greatness, it is also an opportunity to have our hearts transformed by his presence. If you were to walk into the throne room of God, it is hard to think about coming away from that experience unchanged. When we pray, some of that experience should be ours, and the way to help accomplish that is to imagine God as he is, on the throne of glory. Although God is always immanent, meaning he is close to us and loves and protects us, knowing everything about us and caring for us as no one else does, he is also transcendent. God's transcendence means that he is holy, he is full of glory, and he is righteous. The descriptions of God's throne room in the bible, such as in Isaiah 6, should be kept in mind when we pray to God, and should lead us to make adoration and worship a strong element in our prayers. It is also a good idea to bring a friend into the throne room of

God, by lifting up those we know in intercession, thereby helping the adoration to flow from us even more. Spend some time today bringing a friend before God, and try to make it as real as possible.

Verses: James 5:16, Romans 8:26, Matthew 6:7

Prayer Topics: Humility, Gratitude, Transformation