

WORTHY OF PRAISE? Giving Praise to Whom it is Due

2014

“Wouldn’t it be great if our three sons lived close by?” I asked my husband who was sitting in front of his computer playing a game of Solitaire. He made a little gesture as in ‘wait-a-sec’, but I walked away before he could even answer. I was in the kitchen when he finally asked: “What did you say, honey?”

“Oh, nothing important...” I replied.

Yup, it would be wishful thinking on my part to believe that one day our three sons and their families would all end up in our backyard, or close enough!.. At time of writing, our oldest son and his family live in Louisiana, a twelve hour drive from us, and the youngest is in West Palm Beach, FL, a four hour drive. So, our visits are sporadic. But I have to count my blessings. Our middle son and his family live in Ponte Vedra, FL, about an hour and fifteen minutes away from us. So, we’re fortunate to see them on a regular basis.

His wife is presently a stay-at-home mom who takes care of their three young kids ranging from the age of ten months to six years old at time of writing. Staying at home after the birth of their second child was not her choice but she had been laid off due to the poor economy at the time. She held a very lucrative position and losing her job was certainly a hard pill to swallow. However, she was not one to dwell in self-pity. She started her own company as a Life Coach and took a part-time job working from home.

Recently, she was contacted by a company for a full-time position. The opportunity to use her business knowledge again and earn more money is quite an enticing offer. However, she realizes very well all the implications this move could entail for herself and her family, but she is seriously considering it at this time.

During one of our visits, our son had the chance to share with us about this new development. As he said, he totally understood his wife for being ready to go back full time on the market place. He realizes that the job as a stay-at-home mom can be very demanding and most of the time unrewarding. There are no pat on the back, no praise from your employers, and no bonus at the end of the year for a job well done! He, himself, is very fortunate to work for and with people that are not afraid to congratulate him whenever he deserves it and to reward him with a big bonus at the end of the year. But is this something to be expected from all employers?

Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft, gave a speech to High School students about eleven things they *did not* and *will not* learn in school. He talked about how ‘feel-good’ and politically correct teachings created a generation of kids with no concept of reality, and how this concept set them up for failure in the real world.

Rule 1: Life is not fair – get used to it!

Rule 2: The world doesn’t care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something before you feel good about yourself.

Rule 3: You will *not* make \$60,000 a year right out of high school. You won’t be a vice-president with a car phone until you earn both.

Rule 4: If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss.

Rule 5: Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your Grandparents had a different word for burger flipping: they called it opportunity.

Rule 6: If you mess up, it's *not* your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes, learn from them.

Rule 7: Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills, cleaning your clothes and listening to you talk about how cool you thought you were. So before you save the rain forest from the parasites of your parents' generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.

Rule 8: Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life *has not*. In some schools, they have abolished failing grades and they'll give you as *many times* as you want to get the right answer. This doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to anything in real life.

Rule 9: Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you *find yourself*. Do that on your own time.

Rule 10: Television is *not* real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.

Rule 11: Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.

This is quite a reality check, I must say. But I wouldn't want to be too negative here and stop praising our kids when they deserve it. In my opinion, a good balance between teaching the reality of life along with praise should be maintained. If we don't, they may feel defeated even before they venture off on their own.

Praise may be a controversial topic in itself but when you're on the receiving end of it, it just feels great!.. Having been a stay-at-home mom while raising my three boys, I speak with experience when I say that this job is one of the least rewarding as far as receiving praise is concerned. But since I had chosen this career for myself, I was determined to stay focus on my ultimate goal of raising our boys to become our next generation of great guys which, I am proud to say, they have turned out to be. However, I must admit that I couldn't have done it without my husband's help and God's grace in my life.

Proverb 27:2 says: '*Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else and not your own lips*'. Well, I can't deny that whenever people would tell me how our children were so well behaved, I took it as a compliment or praise for having played my part in making it happened. And it surely made me feel *great!*

I admit that we're all responsive to praise and we'll demonstrate an increase in self-esteem or confidence if a suitable amount of praise is received. However, is there such a thing as being overzealous in our praise, especially toward our children and adolescents? Parents at home and teachers at school all want their children and students to succeed, and it's common in this day and age to reward them for a job well done.

Born in 1944, I was raised in an era when most parents – at least mine - were oblivious to any kind of praise. I was always expected to behave well, to earn good grades at school by studying

hard or to do a job to the best of my ability with no mention whatsoever that I would be praised or rewarded for it. I worked very hard without expecting anything in return but self-gratification. And even to this day, I may not have a very high self-esteem probably due to my upbringing, and I may still have a hard time accepting a well-deserved praise, but with hard work, perseverance, patience and determination, I think I have accomplished certain goals in my life that are noteworthy. And raising my three boys is certainly at the top of my list.

I realize there is also another kind of praise that overshadows all other kinds in beauty and in power. And as I was walking this morning, I began to reflect on granny and her heartfelt song of praise she sang to God the other day as the preacher and I sat with her under the majestic oak trees. Her voice may have been frail but she gave her all, and I'm sure God was very pleased with her.

Giving praise to God should be at the very top of my agenda when I start my day, but it's not always so. I'm one who isn't afraid to ask Him for anything and everything but as far as praise goes, I admit I lack big time. And this is very unfortunate... For who but God Himself deserves the most praise from me?.. He's my Creator and the Creator of heaven and earth, the One who loves me unconditionally, who answers my prayers, who gives me peace and so much more.

Psalm 150:6 says: '*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord,*' and as far as I know I'm still breathing! So, I earnestly prayed this morning to have such a heart that will overflow with praise and thanksgiving to God for I know that he delights in it, but most of all because he so deserves it.

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