

How Do I Handle Human Applause?

Celebrity Culture and the Gospel

Scripture: Acts 14:8-28

I. Why This Study?

A. Premise:

In today's culture, fame and recognition are often seen as signs of success. Whether in ministry, work, or social life, human applause can be intoxicating. However, Acts 14:8-28 gives us a powerful example of how Paul and Barnabas responded when people tried to elevate them to celebrity status. Their humility reminds us that all glory belongs to God alone.

B. Purpose:

This study will explore how to handle praise and recognition in a way that honors God. We'll examine the dangers of seeking human approval, the temptation of self-exaltation, and how to redirect all glory back to Christ.

II. Overview and Context: Acts 14:8-28

After being rejected in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas traveled to Lystra, where they healed a man who had been lame from birth. The people of Lystra, overwhelmed by the miracle, attempted to worship them as gods. Instead of accepting the honor, Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes in distress and urgently redirected the crowd's attention to the true and living God.

However, the same people who tried to worship Paul soon turned against him when influenced by Jewish opponents. Paul was stoned and left for dead but miraculously survived and continued preaching the gospel.

III. Key Verses:

1. Acts 14:11-12 – The people mistook Paul and Barnabas for _____.
2. Acts 14:15 – Paul _____ the praise to the living God.
3. Acts 14:19 – The crowd, swayed by opposition, _____ Paul.
4. Acts 14:22 – Paul strengthens believers, reminding them that _____ is part of following Christ.

IV. The Dangers of Celebrity Culture in Ministry

- A. Applause Can Lead to _____ Worship (Acts 14:8-13)
1. After witnessing a miracle, the people of Lystra proclaimed Paul and Barnabas as gods, calling them Zeus and Hermes.
 2. Cultural Insight: In Greek mythology, Zeus and Hermes were believed to have once visited the region _____. The people of Lystra assumed that history was repeating itself.
 3. Application: People often seek visible, tangible figures to admire. Whether pastors, influencers, or leaders, we must be careful not to let _____ turn into _____.
- B. Redirect All Glory to God (Acts 14:14-18)
1. Instead of enjoying the worship, Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes—a sign of _____ and deep _____—urging the people to worship God instead.
 2. Key Truth: Even well-meaning praise can lead us away from God's purpose if we do not redirect it to Him.
 3. Application: When receiving praise or recognition, we should follow Paul's example: humbly pointing people to the true source of all power—_____.
- C. Human Praise is _____ and _____ (Acts 14:19-20)
1. The same crowd that praised Paul quickly turned against him when _____ by Jewish opponents.
 2. Paul was stoned and left for dead, showing how fickle human admiration can be.
 3. Key Truth: If we rely on human applause for our confidence, we will be _____ when that applause fades. True security comes from God's _____, not people's _____.
- D. Stay Focused on the Mission, Not the Applause (Acts 14:21-28)
1. Despite persecution, Paul continued preaching and strengthening the disciples.
 2. Acts 14:22 reminds believers that following Christ includes hardships, but we must remain steadfast.
 3. Application: Whether _____ or _____, our goal should be faithfulness to God's calling, not human approval.

V. Application: How Do I Handle Human Applause?

- A. Stay Humble and Give Glory to God
 - 1. When people compliment your talents, success, or influence, respond with _____ but always direct the _____ to God.
 - 2. Example Response: "Thank you! I'm grateful that God has given me the opportunity to serve in this way."
- B. Be Wary of the Need for Validation
 - 1. Seeking human approval can become _____. Ask yourself:
 - a) Am I more concerned with how people perceive me than with what God says about me?
 - b) Do I serve to impress others or to glorify God?
- C. Expect Both _____ and _____
 - 1. Just as Paul experienced both worship and stoning in the same chapter, we should expect fluctuating opinions from people.
 - 2. Proverbs 29:25: "Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe."
- D. Stay Focused on the Mission, Not Popularity
 - 1. Popularity is fleeting, but faithfulness to God has _____ significance.
 - 2. Whether recognized or overlooked, continue serving God wholeheartedly.

Acts 14:8-28 teaches us that human applause is fleeting and unreliable. The same people who praise us today may turn against us tomorrow. Instead of chasing recognition, we must remain steadfast in our mission, giving all glory to God and staying faithful despite opposition.

Whether honored or hated, let us be like Paul and Barnabas—focused not on human approval, but on advancing the Gospel and glorifying God.

VI. Key Takeaway:

The goal of our lives and ministry should not be fame but faithfulness.

VII. Reflection Questions

- A. Handling Praise and Recognition:
 - 1. How do you respond when people praise or admire your work?

2. Do you struggle with seeking human approval?

B. The Dangers of Celebrity Culture:

1. In what ways does today's culture encourage self-exaltation?
2. How can we resist the temptation to make ministry or leadership about ourselves rather than God?

C. Staying Focused on God's Approval:

1. How can we guard our hearts against the need for validation from others?
2. What practical steps can we take to redirect praise and recognition toward God?