

Practicing Affirmation

Practicing Affirmation: Chapter Four

1. In this short chapter, the author outlines 5 crucial assumptions that underscore his writing. The first is that God sovereignly Brings about Ends through Means. In your own words, what does this mean? Read Isaiah 28:24-29. How does this passage speak to this topic?
2. Describe a personal situation where God appointed means to bring about an end in your life. How can you apply this to our topic of affirmation?
3. He also talks about dependence on the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Spirit. Read the entire third paragraph on p.85: “Though the preponderance of this book.....” Many Christians may not have not thought about what it means to rely on the Holy Spirit or what it looks like to abide in Christ. Why is this such an important part of what it means to practice affirmation?
4. In the last chapter he said that good affirmation is detached from correction, but here he says that love also corrects. How does he hold these things in tension? Ecclesiastes chapter 3 says: “There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens... a time to tear down and a time to build... a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing... a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate...” Do you err on the side of under or over correcting? Which do you need to grow in?
5. He also talks about the fact that “context matters.” What are some of the specific other factors (on the bottom of p. 86) that can affect how someone hears you? See communication hand out.

Questions worth reviewing. These are either questions we never got to, or questions that were worthy of further discussion, since this week's content is shorter.

On p. 30 he says: "Don't affirm any old thing. Don't affirm empty trendiness. Don't stroke the ego. Commend the commendable! Value the valuable! Supremely value the supremely valuable. Worship only Christ, and then commend his image in people." What do you think about this? What do you think of complimenting someone's hair or fashion sense or decorating style? Are these empty affirmations- why or why not? (Discuss living in tension)

At the bottom of page 46, we read: "According to one perspective, "It takes more than one positive to overcome a negative. You hurt my feelings, so do something nice for me. Are we okay? Not usually yet. The bean counters are telling us that a healthy state in a system actually requires 3-5 positive events to overcome one negative event." He later goes on to argue on p. 47 that the reasons for this is because "corrections weigh more than affirmations." Do you agree with this? What has been your personal experience?

Crabtree is careful to say that "affirmation does not entirely remove the place of correction" (p.46)... However: "Affirmations tend to evaporate over time. Meanwhile, corrections keep piling up (outnumbering) affirmations, and by doing so, corrections sabotage or undercut the value of affirmations.... "If not counterbalanced by an overwhelming gang of affirmations, they take over the flavor of the relationship" (pp. 45-46). He says, "Some will choke even at the thought of hair in their food; similarly, people may emotionally choke at the thought of any more correction coming from us." If you're willing to share, describe a relationship where you may have been guilty of this yourself.

Crabtree also makes the distinction that: "It won't do to offer what we assume is refreshment, if it doesn't really refresh" (p.49). Thoughts?

He also states that, "An overabundance of correction will result not only in a person's tuning out your legitimate corrections, but tuning you out almost altogether." This is easy to see in others, but sometimes hard to believe for ourselves that others would tune *us* out. He says that some signs this is happening are: "light heartedness has gone out of the relationship" (p. 50) and "withdrawal" (p. 51). Think of a relationship where this could happen or has happened. How does that make you feel? What would keep you from turning up the affirmation?

On pp.52-53, the author talks about withdraws & deposits and three stages to a relationship: "First, not accepting specific input; then, not accepting your input at all; and third, opposition to any position you take on nearly any subject. While he gives hope for every relationship- even those that have gone to stage 3- I couldn't help but see some resistance in my heart to be the one to take the first step. Can anyone relate? How can we trust God with these feelings of resistance?

On pp. 57-58, Crabtree tells a story about his daughter, with whom he had lost a hearing. When he compliments her for organization & hugging her mom, he ties his compliment to an attribute of God. Then he says: "Is it okay to bring God into your compliments? If you don't think so, you're going to have a hard time with this book. Bringing God into compliments is the best way to give them. I do not mean bringing him in as an afterthought, but basing your compliments and affirmations on his character." What do you think about this?