

Practicing Affirmation

Practicing Affirmation: Chapter Six

1. In this chapter, the author raises potential questions, objections and responds to them. Were there any in particular that you resonated with & if so, why?
2. Did anyone relate to his first objection: “But I’m not a good affirmer... it doesn’t fit my personality”? Have you taken anything away from the book to help with this?
3. What are the three attitudes on p. 114 that he says help make us better affirmers? As you’ve sought to practice affirmation, have you seen yourself struggles with any of these? Or grow in any of them?
4. He also addresses a little further down on the same page- the difference of enslavement to affirmation versus being free to refresh & affirm our neighbor. Has anyone personally experienced the contrast of these two experiences?
5. There’s also the discouragement that can come from feeling like “I’ve tried all this and it didn’t work.” He gives two different answers to this at the bottom of p. 114 and onto p. 115. Would anyone be willing to share a personal example of the frustration that comes when it just doesn’t seem to work. Where/how have you found God at work in the process?
6. Were you surprised by what he said about on p. 116 about prayer & counseling without affirmation leading to false trails. In context, he is not saying that prayer or counsel aren’t important or necessary- but what did he mean by this? Has anyone found this to be true?
7. “But I’m tired of affirming such unresponsive people” (p. 117) “How long is this going to take? I’ve been affirming my (fill in the blank) for years, and nothing seems to be happening” (p. 118). Anyone agree? Thoughts?
8. On p. 117, he says: “I know it’s possible for parents to ‘do everything right’ and still have to endure the heartbreak of a prodigal. God himself who does no wrong has endured wayward children. But I also know of parents who *claim* to have done ‘everything right’ and yet I have observed the pattern of their relationship with their prodigals- imbalanced toward criticism and correction while nearly absent of affirmation. They have not done everything they could.... Let us disabuse ourselves of thinking we have done everything right. There are no flawless parents.” Has anyone been the child of parents who didn’t affirm? The parent? Watched it happen to people they care about? What did you observe?

9. He again addresses the question: “If affirming others is not difficult or overly complicated, why don’t we do more of it?” (pp. 118-119).
10. Did anyone relate to his paragraph on p. 119: “I really don’t think I do that much criticizing, yet my relationship seems strained....”?
11. There is also the issue he raises on p. 119 of “overpraising” that should be avoided. He stresses that the biggest problem is that the affirmation tends to not be God-centered and that “affirmation that points to the attributes of God can’t be done too much. The solution isn’t to affirm less, but to affirm differently” (p. 120). Have you been guilty of overpraising or seen it done?
12. What did you think about his question: Isn’t it oxymoronic to praise humility (p. 123)?
13. Anyone relate to his question on p. 127: “What’s the matter with those people who don’t affirm me? When is it my turn to be affirmed?” Did you find his answer satisfying?
14. What about receiving affirmation? What is the analogy that came to mind for Corrie Ten Boom (see p. 127). Since reading the book, (how) have you seen your ability to receive affirmation grow?

Questions for Review:

From Chapter 3:

The author talks about using affirmation as a reward, or incentive. Are you motivated by affirmation from others? How can we use affirmation in a way that is gospel-driven rather than performance driven?

From Chapter 5:

Another mistake we can make is to confuse affirmation with flattery. Read Proverbs 26:28 and 29:5. Read the last paragraph on p. 107. Whereas affirmation is a free gift with no strings attached, what is the primary motive of the flatterer?

Read the second to last paragraph on the last page of this chapter (Blindness to My Own Hypocrisy). Why is it that we are reluctant to show the grace of affirmation to others when we need it so badly ourselves? How does thinking of ourselves more accurately (becoming aware of our own hypocrisies and shortcomings) free us to affirm more generously?

