

A while back, I had a really meaningful chat with a friend. We were outside, sitting on the tailgate of my truck, enjoying the fading warmth of the afternoon and talking about life. Totally unfiltered.

We were talking about how hard it is to NOT pay attention to other people's opinions about us. Like when somebody criticizes us about how we look or some ignorant statement we make or an epic public failure of some sort. (And we all look goofy, say stupid things, or fail epically at some point in life!) These kinds of things stick to us and mess with our hearts. Nobody likes being told they don't fit in or that they don't measure up or that they are not good enough. We either start trying too hard to fit in...or we get sad/angry/vindictive toward the people who criticize us. And pretty soon we forget who we are and to Whom we belong.

Then we segued to talking about how hard it is to NOT pay attention when people compliment us, praise us, or tell us we're the coolest person ever. These kinds of things stick to us, too, and can mess with our hearts. Most everyone likes being placed up on a pedestal...and if we're not careful, we can begin to think we own the pedestal. We enjoy being King (or Queen) of the hill and start doing whatever we must do in order to retain our crown. And pretty soon we forget who we are and to Whom we belong.

My friend and I decided that living according to the opinions of people is a dicey way to live. Human beings are an insecure lot. When people criticize our shortcomings, it simply underscores the many things we already don't like about ourselves and we become more desperate in our attempts to camouflage our warts. When people praise us, we rejoice because they don't really know our weaknesses and we live in fear that people wouldn't like us anymore if they really knew us. We desperately want to be known (warts and all), we desperately want to be loved, and we desperately want to give our love.

After chatting a while, my friend and I decided that everyone needs one person in their life that knows everything there is to know about him or her and yet loves them unconditionally. We figure that if everyone has a relationship with that special someone who loves them unconditionally then it would be easier to NOT allow the opinions of people to stick on our hearts and mess with our minds. When we know someone who loves us absolutely, not because of what we do or don't do but because of who we are, the shackles of our insecurities begin to crumble. We begin to understand that everyone has an opinion and most are eager to share. The criticism and/or praise of people is manageable when we know there is someone we can go to who will help us un-stick the sticky opinions people throw at us.

This is one of the ways a personal relationship with Jesus transforms your life. Knowing and being known by Jesus is way more than a "Get-Out-Of-Hell" card. Jesus wants to teach you how to live in the present, too. Knowing you are totally accepted and loved by Jesus frees you from being a slave to the opinions of people. Jesus is the only Someone able to love you unconditionally because He is the only Someone that knows you completely. Aren't you weary of trying to earn praise or recognition or approval? Aren't you weary of having to hide your imperfections from the prying eyes of opinionated people? Embrace Jesus and every desire of your heart will be satisfied. Grace & peace, love you. PK.