

Compliments

Introduction. Helen Mrosla writes, “In an earlier grade, I’d taped Mark’s mouth shut for talking too much in class. Now he was a student in my junior high school math class. His class had worked hard all week. By Friday the students were getting cranky. So, for a break, I asked them to write the nicest thing they could about every student and hand it in. She compiled the results for each student and gave out the lists.”

“Several years later, Mark was killed in Vietnam. After the funeral, most of his former classmates gathered with Mark’s parents and me for lunch. Mark’s father took a wallet out of his pocket. ‘They found this on Mark when he was killed,’ he said. He carefully removed a folded, refolded, and taped paper — the one on which she listed the good things Mark’s classmates had said about him.

“Another student, Charlie, smiled sheepishly and said, ‘I keep my list in my desk drawer.’ Chuck’s wife said, ‘Chuck put his in our wedding album.’ ‘I have mine, too,’ Marilyn said, ‘in my diary.’ Vicky reached into her pocketbook and brought out her frazzled list.”

Flattery is excessive and insincere praise, given especially to further one’s own interests. Proverbs 26:28 says that “a flattering mouth works ruin.” Paul didn’t use flattering words (1 Thessalonians 2:4-6). Compliments, on the other hand, are a genuine appreciation of something or someone — and this is the power to build and sustain others. There are six very nice statements about various people that are aspirational for us by demonstrating what we can be to others.

I. The Colossians

- A. They were “saints and faithful brethren in Christ” (Colossians 1:2).
- B. Faithful means “trustworthy, dependable, or reliable.” In other words, it is someone who doesn’t quit, even in the face of problems and trials. God wants you to be faithful (Matthew 25:21, 23; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 17; Revelation 17:14).
- C. Covid has really done a number on a lot of us. Before it happened, we were more faithful and diligent, but now we find faithfulness more of an uphill battle. It’s encouraging to see faithful examples like Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17), Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21), and Epaphras (Colossians 1:7) who serve to spur us on to greater glory.

II. The Macedonians

- A. These Christians gave willingly and liberally to help the poor saints in Jerusalem. The secret was that they first gave themselves to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:5).
- B. Our first job is not to lay up treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19). That’s not the measure of success. It’s how much we can become living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2). Parents especially need to teach their children this crucial lesson.

III. The Corinthians

- A. They were found to be full of zeal in the matter of forgiving the man caught in sin (2 Corinthians 7:11), and their zeal had provoked many in the matter of contributing for the poor saints in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 9:2).

- B. Judah, under the leadership of Asa, swore to serve God (2 Chronicles 15:15; cp. Psalm 27:4). We should have zeal to enter into our rest (Hebrews 4:11), and that zeal should be apparent to many and inspire them to greater zeal.

IV. Stephanas, Fortunatus, And Achaicus

- A. The coming of these Christians refreshed Paul's spirit (1 Corinthians 16:18).
- B. "Refreshed" occurs several times in the New Testament (Philemon 20). It's also translated as "rest" in some places (Matthew 11:28; Revelation 14:13).
- C. It's a tremendous resource to have brethren who can refresh you instead of being a constant drain on you emotionally and spiritually (cp. Acts 18:3).

V. Dorcas

- A. This Christian was full of good works and acts of charity (Acts 9:36).
- B. You are salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16), and as such David encourages you to "Trust in the Lord, and do good" (Psalm 37:3).
- C. We shouldn't grow weary in doing good (Galatians 6:9-10), for with such sacrifices God is well pleased (Hebrews 13:16). Paul says that all of us who are blessed with material wealth should be rich in good works and be willing to share (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

VI. A Woman

- A. She anointed Jesus with precious ointment (Mark 14:3-9). Her perfume (not oil like with a regal anointing) is an anticipatory preparation of Jesus' body. He said that she has "done what she could" (v. 8).
- B. A part of your faithfulness and therefore your eternal reward is composed of doing what you can (Matthew 25:38). Even though it wasn't much, this woman was praised for what she did (Matthew 10:42). The same was true for the poor widow who could only contribute two copper coins (Mark 12:41-44).
- C. You may think your card, call, or text isn't much; you may think that the plant you bought has a big bare spot or the meal you prepared didn't include a dessert, but you are blessed because the Master will say that you have "done what you could."

Conclusion. Wouldn't we like these to apply to us? These words reflect genuine appreciation, and this is what we should aspire to be. When we do, not only are we making ourselves better disciples, but we're building up the body of Christ too.