

Congratulating Or Criticizing

I saw a Facebook post about a teacher who wrote on the board a list of equations with one wrong and nine correct answers. The class laughed at the teacher as they pointed out her error. The teacher told the class that their reaction was typical. It is human nature to point out the one time a person messed up and ignore the many good things the same person did. The teacher's goal was to encourage each member of the class to stay strong when criticized by others.

I think there is an additional dimension to this story. Instead of criticizing someone, we – you and I -- have a chance to affirm them for the many things they do right. Instead of sitting silently on the sidelines while a person is bashed by others we can step up – publically or privately -- and be an encourager.

Everyone makes mistakes. At least they try. Thankfully, people are willing to step up their efforts to do something good. If they are knocked down because of false starts, mistakes or having to change directions, we could be the one to encourage them to keep going.

The greatest basketball player of all time missed 9,000 shots and lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times the game was put in his hands and he missed the shot that would have won the game. That player was Michael Jordan, who said, "I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." Inventor Thomas A. Edison says, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." American entrepreneur Malcom Forbes said "Failure is success if we learn from it." And genius Albert Eisenstein said "A person who never made a mistake, never tried anything new."

Along the way Jordan, Edison, Forbes and Eisenstein had people who encouraged them during times when they made mistakes. This is where you and I come in. We can be the people whose affirmation and encouragement motivates someone to achieve greatness. The Bible tells us, *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing (1 Thessalonians 5:11)*. That is all it takes.

I have heard it said that if a person is told they are kind, they will adopt kind behavior toward others. If you praise someone's generosity in one situation they will become more generous in other situations. Whatever the positive attribute you acknowledge, people will seek to live up to it in all they do. They will become what they believe they are. Their vision of themselves comes from you.

Resist the temptation to criticize and, instead, be one of the encouragers. As a result you may watch greatness unfold before your eyes, as your encouragement motivates them to succeed. Accept honest mistakes as a learning process and praise what is praiseworthy. Encourage what is noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable.

The Bible Says: *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

Prayer: Dear Lord. We have the power to change a life by our encouragement. Allow people to learn from their mistakes as they grow to be what You have designed them to be. Amen.

One day a school teacher wrote on the board the following:

$$9 \times 1 = 7$$

$$9 \times 2 = 18$$

$$9 \times 3 = 27$$

$$9 \times 4 = 36$$

$$9 \times 5 = 45$$

$$9 \times 6 = 54$$

$$9 \times 7 = 63$$

$$9 \times 8 = 72$$

$$9 \times 9 = 81$$

$$9 \times 10 = 90$$

When she was done, she looked to the students and they were all laughing at her, because of the first equation which was wrong, and then the teacher said the following;

I wrote that first one wrong on purpose, because I wanted you to learn something important. This was for you to know how the world out there will treat you. You can see that I wrote the RIGHT thing 9 times, but none of you congratulated me for it, But you all laughed and criticized me because of one wrong thing I did.