

BEWARE OF FLATTERY

In ancient Greece, one of the most politically crafty philosophers was Aristippus. He also had a hearty appetite for “the good life.”

Although Aristippus disagreed with the tyrant, Denys, who ruled over the region, he had learned how to get along with him in court by flattering him on all occasions.

Aristippus looked down his nose at some of the less prosperous philosophers and wise men who refused to stoop that low.

One day, Aristippus saw his colleague, Diogenes, washing some vegetables. He said to Diogenes disdainfully, “If you would only learn to flatter King Denys, you would not have to be washing lentils.”

Diogenes looked up slowly, and in the same tone of voice replied, “And you, if you had only learned to live on lentils, would not have to flatter King Denys.”

Flattery, defined as insincere or excessive praise, is closely aligned with lying and manipulation. A genuine compliment is always in order, but flattery is telling a person something that is not true in hopes of gaining his or her favor.

What the flatterer doesn't realize, of course, is that with each falsehood, he is diminishing his own value. Eventually, his words have no meaning and his flattery sounds hollow – even to the one who has been flattered.

Choose instead to be a person of principle – one who speaks the truth in love.

As I heard an old-timer say once: “The man who pays an ounce of principle for a pound of popularity gets badly cheated.”

For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:43 KJV).

– Beecher Hunter