

**Series: The Gospel of Freedom and the Things That Hinder**

**Message: "The Approval Trap"**

**1 Thessalonians 2:1-6**

**Central Thought:** *When we value ourselves by what others think about us, we enslave ourselves to unreliable opinions and distance ourselves from God's guaranteed and eternal acceptance of us.*

1) What is the approval trap?

- A lie that says,  
"I must **gain** the approval of certain people in order to feel good about myself."

2) What are some causes of the approval trap?

- Past rejection – the enslaving expectation of **future** rejection.
- Past acceptance – an **intoxicating** need for more.
- Loneliness – the longing to belong to something of **value**.
- Social environment – a **world** based on punishment and reward.
- The **Church** – a Gospel of earning God's approval; harsh judgment for sin.

3) What are some symptoms of the approval trap?

- People-pleasing – becoming a **doormat**.
- Falseness – pretension and superficiality.
- Low self-esteem – living by **past** rejection.
- Isolation – from loneliness to aloneness.
- Defensiveness – unable to hear even constructive criticism.
- A **critical** spirit – tendency to see the downside.

4) What happens when we give in to the approval trap?

When people approve:

- Addiction – activities that gain approval.
- Being **easily** manipulated.
- **Loss** of identity and moral standards.

When people disapprove:

- Anger and resentment toward others.
- Withdrawal – **avoidance** of potential critics.
- **Control** – we manipulate as we were manipulated.
- Summary – we become **takers** rather than givers in all relationships.

5) How do we defeat the approval trap? Mark 1:11

- **Believe** that God's approval is the only reliable approval that we have.
- **Determine** that God's approval is the only approval that we need.

- **Receive** God's reliable approval through Jesus.
- **Learn** to respond by renewing the voice of the Father.
- **Become** a community of edification.

Colossians 4:6

**Word bank:** avoidance, become, believe, church, control, critical, determine, doormat, easily, future, gain, intoxicating, learn, loss, past, receive, takers, value, world

**For LIFE Groups and personal reflection**

- 1) Whose approval is more important to you than it should be?
- 2) When someone disapproves of you, how do you respond?
- 3) Who is someone that you avoid and why?
- 4) In what ways is Bangkok a lonely city?
- 5) What could make people lonely at ECB?

**Resource** – Robert McGee, [The Search for Significance](#).

**Resource** – Bobb Biehl, [Why You Do What You Do](#).

**Resource** – Brennan Manning, [Abba's Child](#).