



Life Actually

By Kari Kampakis

Popular with God

There are billions of opinions in this world, but only one opinion counts.

Others like to convince us that they can solve our life, but only He is omnipotent.

We think of peer pressure as something teenagers face, but really it carries through life. The pressures just grow more refined. During our youth, we're encouraged to live on the edge, to experiment and defy authority. But as adults we're expected to live a life that others will envy. We're pressured to live in certain neighborhoods, belong to certain clubs, put our kids in certain schools and drive certain cars.

And if we listen to it all, it can drive us nuts.

Adopting the herd mentality puts a gap between who we are and what God made us to do. It chips away at our authenticity, the best part of us. It makes us puppets to well-meaning friends, parents, bosses or mentors. It eats away at our soul and suffocates us slowly, like a pillow over the face that sinks deeper every day.

I don't know about you, but it seems to me that a lot of problems could be eliminated if we stopped chasing the approval of others and started chasing God. Doubts, insecurities and fears of rejection would fly out the window if we quit worrying about the world's judgment and trained our minds on God. What does He want? Are our actions pleasing to Him? If so we can rest easy, taking pride in our efforts regardless of the outcome.

Here's a story to illustrate. When I first started this column, I quickly became hooked on reader feedback. It felt great to hear people praise a certain piece or compliment my writing. I wanted to build a following, and while I always wrote from my heart, I chose topics based on what I thought would touch the most people.

In other words, I wanted to be popular.

But somewhere along the way, I began to see this journey isn't all about me. I realized my happiness shouldn't depend on what others say because kudos and praise are fleeting and waiting for them can be torture. By writing with God in mind — and putting out messages He'd be proud

of — I find my reward. Any additional praise is icing on the cake.

It was a big relief to adopt this way of thinking. No longer was I on pins and needles waiting to see how a column was received. Whatever the results, I could trust that they'd play into His plan for me. When I write with God on my team, I'm not alone. Anything I do right is to His credit, because He enables me through grace and gifts.

I wish I could say I'm divinely inspired each month, but often it's a leap of faith. I write what I need to hear and think others could benefit from as well, pray for my readers and hope that someone is touched. Whether it's one or many, it doesn't matter. It still makes a difference.

God created all of us with unique talents and for unique purposes. When we imitate others, we lose ourselves. It's scary to be different because being different can get us kicked out of the herd. It's safer to blend in, even if blending in means living a watered-down life.

Some people may think that being popular with God ostracizes us, but I believe it leads to richer relationships. I believe followers find each other, strengthening one another as "iron sharpens iron" (Proverbs 27:17). If living your life God's way alienates you from peers, maybe you're in the wrong herd. Maybe you never had the security you once thought.

There are billions of opinions in this world, but only one opinion counts. To me this simplifies things. It's like getting permission to be ourselves, to stand with confidence and say no when something's not right for us. This is easier said than done, of course, but all it takes is awareness of whom we're serving. Are we chasing the approval of others or chasing God? Whose judgment matters most?

That is the question of life.

Kari Kubiszyn Kampakis is a Mountain Brook mom of four with a background in PR, writing and photography. Visit karikampakis.com, find her on Facebook and Twitter, or contact her at kari@karikampakis.com.

www.VillageLivingOnline.com