

The Flaw Of Flattery

8-5-14

An old English fable contains a truth well worth repeating: A crow swooped low over the lunch of a peasant and stole a piece of cheese. A wise fox, watching the crow with jealousy, wanted the cheese for himself.

"O Crow," said the fox in his most flattering voice, "how beautiful are your wings. How brightly shine your searching eyes. How graceful is your strong, flexible neck. Your chest is the chest of a soaring eagle. Your talons are no match for all the beasts of the field. O that such a bird would lack only a voice."

The crow, thrilled and jubilant over the flattery, chuckled to herself and decided to surprise the fox with her voice. When she opened her mouth to speak, the cheese fell to the ground and the fox gathered it up and nonchalantly walked away.

Flattery is different from encouragement. We give courage to those who are struggling with life's problems. We give hope to those who have fallen when we offer a hand to pick them up. We give peace when we recognize those plagued by sadness, by giving them a genuine smile that says, "Everything's going to be alright."

Flattery is different from a compliment. A compliment offers genuine appreciation for a quality or action seen in another person. The goal of flattery is usually self-advancement through gaining the favor of someone else. Compliments seek to encourage; flattery attempts to manipulate. Flattery praises someone for something that is not true or honest to make them feel good about mediocrity - even failure. False praise, though well intended, is deceitful and in the end, it destroys.

Rehull Williams III