

# The Doctrine of Flattery

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

“Flattery is like wine, which exhilarates a man for a moment, but usually ends up going to his head and making him act foolish.” —Helen Rowland

“An overdose of praise is like ten lumps of sugar in coffee; only a very few people can swallow it.” —Emily Post

This doctrine was taken from **2Samuel 14** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Believers have a confused notion of what they ought to be doing. Some people think that loving the brethren means you isolate various church members and tell them that you love them or say 5 nice things about them. The latter is very likely sin, depending upon your motivation.

## The Biblical Doctrine of Flattery

1. Flattery is generally an insincere opinion offered up with the intention of manipulating another person. It may represent something that you believe to be true or not. It is often an exaggeration of what is true. Flattery is defined as *excessive or insincere praise*.<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Our passage is all about this woman who has a particular objective (to get Absalom returned to Jerusalem; and to keep herself from being punished for coming to court with a false case). 2Sam. 14:17, 19–20
  - b. Flattery will be one of the cornerstones of Absalom’s rebellion against David. 2Sam. 15:2–6

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- c. Jude speaks of the ungodly in this way: **These are grumblers, complainers, going [fig., *living*] according to their lusts, and their mouth speaks swollen [fig., *pompous*] [words], admiring faces [fig., *flattering people*] for the sake of [gaining] an advantage** (Jude 16; Analytical-Literal Version). They compliment others with the intention of gaining an advantage over them.
- d. Rom. 16:18 **For such do not serve as a slave to our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly [fig., *bodily desires*] [or, *personal desires*], and through smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the hearts of the innocent [or, *unsuspecting*] (ALV).**
- e. Therefore, the sin of flattery is very much tied to motivation.
2. Flattery is not encouragement; and flattery is not the same as a sincere compliment.
  - a. It is okay to encourage your children, students, employees, co-workers, etc.; but it should be done as an honest appraisal, rather than flattering words used to affect their behavior for good.
  - b. Paul expressed sincere appreciation for several people in his life. 2Cor. 7:13 2Tim. 1:16
3. Flattery in the Bible is a verbal sin:
  - a. **Everyone speaks lies [or, *emptiness*] to his neighbor [or, *associate*]; they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips. May Y<sup>e</sup>howah remove all flattering lips, [and] tongues which boast great things, [and cut off those] who have said, “We will prevail because of our speech [lit., *tongue*]; our lips [are] our own; who is our lord?” (Psalm 12:2–4).**
  - b. King David says this of his enemies: **Nothing in their mouths is truthful. Destruction comes from their hearts. Their throats are open graves. They flatter with their tongues (Psalm 5:9; .**
4. Flattery is often used to entrap another person (not literally, but to use flattery in order to manipulate that person). **A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet (Psalm 29:5).** See also Psalm 55:21
5. Flattery, like any other sin, should be named to God in order to restore oneself to fellowship. 1John 1:9
6. Paul never used flattering words in order to teach Bible doctrine or to influence his hearers. 1Thess. 2:5
7. Some people actually flatter themselves. Psalm 36:2
8. During periods of time that Israel was in rebellion against God, they desired that the prophets not tell them the truth, but tell them flattering things. 1Kings 22:13 Isa. 30:10
9. Honesty is more important than flattery. Our entire school system is built around flattery, where we attempt to convince our students that they are the greatest kids in the world (the self-esteem movement). Prov. 28:23
10. Men are often easily manipulated with flattery, something which most women seem to know. When they tell us good things about ourselves—things which we believe to be true—we cannot help but pay attention to a woman who is so perceptive. **She seduces him with her persistent pleading; she lures with her**

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- flattering talk** (Prov. 7:21). See also Prov. 5:3–4
11. The cure for such men is discernment that comes from Bible doctrine in the soul. Prov. 2:16 7:5
  12. Like all other sins, flattery is to be avoided.
  13. We are to avoid others who flatter regularly. Prov. 20:19

<sup>1</sup> From <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Flattery> accessed July 7, 2012.

This same **source** had a few quotations about flattery, which you might find insightful and/or amusing:

As a wolf is like a dog, so is a flatterer like a friend -Thomas Fuller

Compliments are like perfume, to be inhaled, not swallowed -Charles Clark Munn

Flattered me like a dog -William Shakespeare

Flattery is like a cigarette; it is all right if you don't inhale -Adlai Stevenson

Flattery is like champagne, it soon gets into the head -William Brown

Flattery is like cologne water, to be smelt of, not swallowed -Josh Billings Paraphrased from Billings'

Praise, like gold and diamonds, owes its value only to its scarcity -Samuel Johnson

Some of these verses were suggested by:

<http://www.bible-topics.com/Flattery.html> accessed July 7, 2012.

There are additional verses on flattery in **Psalm 12** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#))

### Additional Points on Flattery

from Lake Erie Bible Church

Flattery is closely associated with deceit and is a sin of the tongue.

1. Flatter is always associated with deceit. Psalm 12:2 Prov.26:28 Rom.16:18
2. Flattery is often the modus operandi of the evil woman. Prov.2:16 7:5,21
3. It is a function of the deceivers of the last days. Judges 16
4. There is more blessing for rebuke than flattery. Prov.28:23
5. It is something that is foreign to the mature believer. Job 32:21,22
6. Flattery is not a function of the faithful communicator. 1Thess.2:5
7. God will cut off all flatterers. Psalm 12:3

Taken from: [http://www.lakeeriebiblechurch.org/doctrine/pdf/sins\\_of\\_the\\_tongue.pdf](http://www.lakeeriebiblechurch.org/doctrine/pdf/sins_of_the_tongue.pdf) Some minor editing was done.

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