

# Who is filling the approval hole in your heart?



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weeks ago.

Well done, good and faithful servant!" These are the words I believe my friend, LaVerne, received as he entered the gates of heaven and into the arms of his Savior a couple of weeks ago.

Do you remember LaVerne? I wrote about him last year. He made glorious crosses out of wood and old square nails and gave them away—to strangers. I am a blessed recipient of one of his crosses which sits proudly on my desk as a reminder.

A reminder of what Christ did for me on the cross and how I should live my life because of His love and grace. And a reminder of LaVerne—a man I met only briefly, but one who impacted my heart in that he did here on earth what he was called to do—live a good life pleasing to the Lord and share the Good News with others.

I don't know the ins and outs of LaVerne's ninety-five years on earth. I don't know what his faith journey was like, all of the trials he faced, or even what brought him to make these crosses to give away in order to share the gospel. I would have loved to know these things but Covid hit and visitation was shut down.

Perhaps the little I know is enough.

Though I am half of LaVerne's age, I like to think we have a pretty big thing in common ... something we've learned from life's trials and our perseverance through them. Something we both could only come to glean from the One we both love—Jesus Christ.

That something is this: we have an audience of One.

As my study Bible states: To be productive for God, we must obey His teachings, resist temptations, actively serve and help others, and share our faith. LaVerne did the latter through his crosses—and I am doing it through my writing.

There are two things I have been told to never do in marketing: talk about politics and talk about God. The first is great advice and I adhere to it. The second I followed for a while but then, I could not help myself. I simply ooze Jesus. He is #1 in my life, He has brought me through so much that I want to share it with all who will listen, and He gave me the gift of writing—how can I not share Him with others or glorify Him with what I put to paper? He is the only One I seek the approval of. But it wasn't always this way.

Who are you seeking approval from? Who are you showing off for? When you boast, what or whom do you boast about? Who is your audience? If you were to die tomorrow, would you hear the words LaVerne heard on July 16th—his last day on earth and first day in heaven?

Let's talk about approval. We are all seeking approval from someone, aren't we? Perhaps you've been seeking the approval of your parents—even as an adult. Perhaps you are seeking the approval of your spouse, children, or friends. If we are honest with ourselves, there is always someone we are seeking the approval of.

How do you go about seeking approval? Do you brag about the things you do, things you buy, or the way you look? Are you a workaholic with a never-ending mission to be successful? What does success mean to you?

Do you buy things to "keep up with the Jones's", even when you can't afford them, simply to get the approval of others or even yourself? What is the approval hole you are trying to fill?

When we first opened our auto repair shop, I'll be honest—I was seeking all sorts of approval. Approval from friends, customers, employees, family—you name them, I wanted their approval.

My husband and I put blood, sweat, and tears into remodeling and all we did to open our business with both of us having the desire to be the best and earn approval. Our hearts were right in how we wanted to serve, but were they fully right in who we were seeking the approval of?

A couple of years into our business, we had the opportunity for a new kind of approval—from AAA (American Automobile Association). The criteria to become a triple-A Approved Auto Repair facility is tough. They select only the best and we wanted this badge of honor. We also wanted to help those traveling through as well as earn the confidence from those living in our city—giving them peace of mind that they were getting the best.

You might wonder, what is a triple-A Approved Auto Repair Shop and how does one attain their approval?

Oftentimes when people think about AAA, they envision superhero tow trucks rescuing them in times of trouble. But what many don't know is how their program extends into repair shops.

With superior service and integrity as major values of AAA, it's no wonder their expectations of approved shops are so high. Their high standards encompass the quality of repair, competency of mechanics, reliability of service, cleanliness of the facility, overall experience, and fair pricing.

In order to be approved or certified by AAA, a shop must meet or exceed their specifications as well as continue to do so in order to ensure it is consistently offering excellent service to its members.

## Credibility

AAA reviews the business owner's credibility. They perform a background check on the owner as well as require references to ensure the business is ethical, credible, and trustworthy. They also ensure the business has proper liability insurance that will protect its members.

## Customer experience

Representatives from AAA visit the shop and take a tour of the customer waiting area to ensure the facility meets its cleanliness standards. Customers are also surveyed randomly and public reviews are critiqued to ensure satisfaction of 94% or higher.

## Shop tour

In addition to the waiting area, AAA representatives also tour the shop to ensure that proper equipment is supplied for all auto repairs and maintenance performed. They also verify that the equipment is in good working condition, safely used, and well maintained.

## Mechanical aptitude

AAA ensures technicians are ASE-certified in every repair area performed by the shop. They also

require that Master ASE-certified technicians are employed for their expertise and to oversee and guarantee quality repairs.

## Maintaining AAA approval

Once AAA has reviewed all areas of the shop and employees and have given their AAA "stamp of approval", they continue to monitor the shop for excellence on an ongoing basis.

Having met or exceeded all of the criteria set to become a triple A shop, we were awarded this honor and have been proud to offer benefits to our customers associated with their AAA membership for the last eight years.

But then came a problem.

We know that we are not the only auto repair shop in Rochester that has achieved the AAA-approved auto repair status. There were two other shops that also held this certification—and therein lies the problem.

You see, we had been hearing negative things from many that questioned the integrity, quality, credibility, and mechanical aptitude of one of these shops that had changed ownership. However, it was out of our ability or power to do anything about it so we continued to run our shop without engaging in the gossip that was circling our city.

However, there came a point when we could no longer ignore what was being said as it was greatly affecting the safety of motorists in our community. As more and more new customers came to us for service and we began discovering safety issues caused by this AAA-approved repair shop, our concerns sky-rocked. We were greatly distressed—not only in the fact that we were associated with such a shop, having the same AAA accreditation, but that AAA was doing nothing about it ... until they did.

For a while, the shop and owner were able to strategically evade AAA's inquiries or pacify them with false information. But with many other shops reporting issues and customers experiencing the problems, the truth finally reached AAA.

In alignment with their values, expectations, and high standards, AAA took action and appropriate steps to remove their "stamp of approval" from the shop completely—in both towing and auto repair. In so doing, they have held true to their word and their mission in how they care greatly for their customer's safety and work hard to maintain their trust.

I would like to pause here a moment in order to shine a good light on the other shop that is currently AAA approved—Joe's Auto Care. His shop continues to meet AAA standards and is not the shop that had the "stamp of approval" removed.

My intent of sharing all of this with you is not to bad-mouth the other shop. It is to highlight the integrity of AAA and to reveal why we wanted to earn their "stamp of approval". It is also for your benefit—bringing to light things that the general public may not be aware of so that you can make informed decisions in the future—decisions that may affect your safety or the safety of those you love.

All of this has made me wonder—how could so many failures come about with that shop? Your guess is as good as mine. But perhaps the ultimate question we must all ask

ourselves is, who are we seeking approval from?

Who is filling the approval hole in your heart?

I used to struggle with this—both in my business and personal life.

A business example: I would become crushed when our business received a false bad review—some were completely false, some were lacking the whole truth, some weren't even from customers. But my hands were tied. They were out there for the world to see and there's not much I could do about it.

A personal example: I would become disheartened if I didn't receive the approval, in one way or another, from a family member or a friend—for whatever reason. I would beat myself up for it, speak all sorts of negative things to myself even if I didn't know what I did wrong, and grieve greatly when a relationship was fractured or lost.

Friends, what I have come to learn is that there is only One that I must seek approval from. When I fill my approval hole with God by doing what my study Bible says: obey His teachings, resist temptations, actively serve and help others, and share my faith, the rest—all the rest, becomes insignificant.

Here's why—because if I am living to please God, and God only, the rest will be taken care of.

Back to my examples—if someone leaves a review for our business that is lacking truth in any way, they will ultimately have to live with themselves and one day give an accounting for their actions—not to me, but to God. If someone doesn't like me, approve of me, want to spend time with me—for whatever reason, that is okay. Not everyone is going to like me or approve of me and I certainly don't want anyone unhappily spending time with me or being fake around me.

I also know that not everyone holds my belief in Christ. And that is okay. It's not my job to convince others to believe. It is my job to live rightly, love and serve others and share Jesus with whoever will listen.

I believe this is exactly what LaVerne did. And because of that, we are no longer strangers. We are a brother and sister in Christ, doing on earth what we were called to do.

So, you see, the little I knew of LaVerne was enough. It was enough for me to see his tremendous heart and know in mine that we are forever bonded—through my writings that he loved to read, through his cross that reminds me of him and our Savior every day, and through this story and the previous one I wrote with an intent to love him as I boasted about Christ.

Galatians 6:14 says "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

1 Corinthians 1:31 says "Therefore, as it is written: 'Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord'".

One day, I deeply hope that I get to hear the same words I believe LaVerne heard a few weeks ago: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Until then, I will live for the approval of One, I will boast only in Him, and I will excitedly await the day when I get to see my friend, LaVerne again in heaven.

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