

REFLECTIONS

February 13, 2005

**If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat;
if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head and
the LORD will reward you.**

Proverbs 25:21-22

Eliminate the negative ...

Responses to “Accent-u-ate the positive...” have been so interesting and varied, that I feel challenged to reflect further on the concept. Collectively the responses represented two perspectives—one applauded *how we should be* and the other begged *what should we do?*

The context of the message was the verse from 1 Thessalonians that says, “*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.*” That was the point; be positive—lift each other up. But the words to the song also direct us to “eliminate the negative,” and they warn us about messing with “Mr. In Between.”

One of the concerns expressed was an implication that the negative should be ignored. No. “Ignore” is just another name for “Mr. In Between.” If we ignore the negative, we are in essence condoning it. If we fail to reward the positive, we are in essence rejecting it. So it becomes imperative that we approve what is right and confront what is wrong. The question is how we go about it?

We are far more likely to eliminate what is harmful through invitation than through indictment. Indictments provoke defenses. Invitations encourage participation. An example of eliminating the negative while accentuating the positive is “You are so very good at...” followed by an invitation like, “What are some things that could be done better?” I find myself in the most trouble when I use indicting statements like “Why didn’t you...” or “You need to...” In most matters, we are more effective in correcting the negative with encouragement than with condemnation. That’s the whole point of the Shamu trainers. They eliminate the negative by accentuating the positive—and there is no in between.

This week let’s seek the Lord’s reward by heaping burning coals on harmful things by exemplifying the power of positive words and deeds.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +