

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - June 17, 2021

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Title: "When You are Criticized"

Subtitle: "Coping with Criticism"

Scripture Reference: Matthew 7:3

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"

I. Introduction

A. Charles H. Spurgeon and Dwight L. Moody were two of the greatest preachers during the nineteenth Century. Although Moody had never met Spurgeon, he greatly admired the Englishman and arranged to meet him in London.

B. After Moody traveled across the Atlantic Ocean, Moody found Spurgeon's residence and knocked on the door. Spurgeon answered with a cigar in his mouth. Moody was shocked.

C. Moody said to Spurgeon, "How could you, a man of God, smoke that?" Spurgeon took the cigar from his mouth, put his finger on Moody's huge stomach, smiled and said, "The same way that you, a man of God, could be that fat!"

D. It is so easy to see the faults in others, but difficult to see them in ourselves. Faults are like the headlights on a car - those of others seem more glaring than our own.

Comment: Because our faults are easily seen by others, it doesn't take much for us to become targets of criticism.

I want to share with you an incident (perhaps not really an incident but criticism) I received many years ago.

After I had preached the Sunday morning sermon, the church and I had been previously invited to fellowship with another church across town on this particular Sunday afternoon. I would subsequently deliver the sermon at the afternoon Service.

Upon arrival at the church, the host pastor began the Service, and when it was time for me to preach, he introduced me. After my sermon, a preacher who had visited my church during our morning worship, had now listened both my morning, and evening sermon, which I had just delivered.

After I completed my evening sermon, the host pastor recognized this visiting preacher. This was a courtesy that most host pastors extend. (You might call this pastoral etiquette). When the visiting preacher stood up to speak, his words were, "I enjoyed this afternoon's sermon because this morning, the preacher (me) didn't do anything."

In other words, my morning sermon, which was not peppered with a lot of emotional hollering and hacking (like he obviously did when he preached), didn't appeal to him. [The afternoon sermon also did not contain hollering and hacking. In fact, none of my sermons do!]

Needless to say, I took it all in stride without commenting but the criticism hurt.

E. Maybe you have been criticized and it really hurt. Unfortunately, we must learn how to live under the scrutiny of judgmental eyes.

F. Here are a few things to consider about criticism.

- People often become critical based upon their own personal biases.
- People often become critical based upon wrong or misleading information.
- You cannot escape criticism by trying to please your critics.
- If you try to defend yourself against criticism, you waste a lot of energy and accomplish little.
- If Jesus couldn't please everyone, why would you think you can?
- The more spotlight placed upon you, the bigger the target of criticism you become.
- Wherever there is light, there are also bugs.
- God can use your critics to reveal things in your life that need to be changed.

G. We must learn to discern when criticism is and is not valid. And because criticism can be so devastating, we must also learn how to cope with it.

II. Exposition [Part I] - Why People Criticize

A. When we are being judged, we usually don't stop to consider the reasons for the criticism. Some would like to retreat, turn inward and not deal with it.

B. However, God will allow criticism to come to us, whether justified or not, to refine us and continue to mold us.

C. Correctly handling criticism is one of the ways to become more like Christ. If we can understand the reasons why people criticize, we can learn how to handle fault-finding correctly.

III. Exposition [Part II] - Reason # 1 -

Some people criticize because they have a critical spirit.

A. Jesus said a critical person can't see the log in their own eye, yet they will point out specks in other people's eyes.

B. A judgmental person is very quick on the flaw. He or she inspects for specks.

C. Those type of people have unreal expectations of what they want from you, so you will never be able to live up to their standards.

D. They will drag you into their court of judgment, and without a trial, sentence you to a life of condemnation without parole.

E. Consider this incident. A man and his wife pulled into a gas station to refuel their car. As the tank was being refilled, the station attendant washed the windshield.

F. When the attendant finished, the driver of the car said, "The windshield is still dirty; Wash it again."

G. "Yes, sir," the attendant answered. As he scrubbed the windshield a second time, he looked closely for any bugs or dirt he had missed. When he finished, the driver became angry. "It's still dirty!" he yelled. "Don't you know how to wash a windshield? Do it again!"

H. The attendant cleaned the windshield a third time, carefully looking for any place he might have missed, but he couldn't find any messy spots anywhere.

I. By now, the driver was fuming. He screamed, "This windshield

is still filthy! I'm going to talk to your boss to make sure you don't work here another day. You are the lousiest windshield washer I have ever seen!"

J. As he was about to get out of the car, his wife reached over and removed his glasses. She carefully wiped them with a tissue, then put them back on his face. The driver embarrassingly slumped down in his seat as he observed a spotless windshield.

Points:

- (1) Critical people view others through their own dirty glasses.
- (2) The dirt on their hearts causes them to see everything from an unclean, critical perspective.

K. They become angry at what they perceive to be dirt on other people, when in reality they are looking at others through the dirt on their own hearts.

L. Their critical spirits cause them to continue to find fault in others until the filth in their hearts has been cleansed.

IV. Exposition [Part III] - Reason # 2-

Some people criticize because they don't know the whole story.

A. Because the critical person is looking for specks, he, or she will not take time to observe the big picture.

B. A situation can't be correctly understood until it is seen in its entirety. Since the critical person refuses to see the whole, he or she misinterprets the part.

C. They take things out of context, reading between the lines,

and then jumps to wrong conclusions, simply because they haven't taken the time to know the whole story. They refuse to see life from any perspective other than their own.

D. Here is an old poem (author unknown) that shares some good advice for all of us.

Don't find fault with the man who limps or stumbles along life's road.
Unless you have worn the shoes he wears or struggled beneath his load.
There may be tacks in his shoes that hurt,
Though hidden away from our view,
The burden he bears, if placed on your back,
Might cause you to stumble too.

Don't sneer at the man who is down today,
Unless you have felt the blow
That caused his fall, or felt the same
That only the fallen know.

You may be strong, but still the blows that were his, if dealt to you
In the self-same way at the self-same time,
Might cause you to stagger too.

Don't be too harsh with a man who sins,
Or pelt him with words or stones,
Unless you are sure, yes, doubly sure
That you have no sins of your own.

Comment: People cannot completely understand what you are going through until they experience the same thing. After walking in your shoes for a while, they might not be so critical.

V. Exposition [Part IV] - Reason # 3 -

Some people criticize because it makes them feel better about themselves

A. The critic usually has a terrible self-image. Their inability to accept themselves as God created them causes them to view themselves in a distorted, unhealthy way.

B. They feel inferior to others, and consider everyone else a threat to their self-worth.

C. In order to elevate themselves and look better in comparison, they resort to belittling and criticizing, pointing out real or apparent flaws in others.

D. King Saul was insecure and felt threatened by David. After David had killed the giant Goliath, women danced in the streets and sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Jealousy and anger filled Saul's heart, and he looked at David with suspicion from that day onward (1 Samuel 18:6-9).

E. The next day, an evil spirit came upon Saul. His insane jealousy opened him up to the influence of this demon, which eventually took control of him.

F. The next time Saul saw David, he hurled a spear at him, trying to pin him against the wall (1 Samuel 18:10-11).

G. Critical spirits will always try to pin people against walls.

H. Have you criticized someone because you felt threatened?

Point: Don't let your self-worth be determined by comparing yourself with others.

VI. Exposition [Part V] - Reason # 4 -

Some people criticize because it's easier to complain about problems than to solve them.

- A. Some people have enough steam to blow the whistle, but not enough steam to pull the train.
- B. They blow off steam by whining and complaining, rather than trying to be part of the solution.
- C. Listen to this story. There was a lady in a church who was known for her persistent complaining. One day she said to the pastor, "Our church doesn't have enough fellowships (i.e., events that allow people to come together and socialize).
- D. The lady told the pastor, "You should rent the YMCA for the church to have a fellowship night." She kept complaining, asking the pastor, "When is the church going to rent the YMCA?"
- E. The church finally rented the YMCA, and on the big night, everyone in the church showed up; everyone except the critical woman and her family.
- F. The pastor phoned the lady from the YMCA, asking if she or someone in her family was sick. "No," she replied, "We're just tired and won't make it tonight."
- G. The pastor's eyes were opened to the truth that some people have enough steam to blow whistles, but not enough steam to pull the train.
- H. The people most critical of problems, usually have no intention of becoming a part of solutions!

VII. Exposition [Part VI] - Reason # 5 -

Some people criticize because the person they are criticizing is godly.

A. For every godly action, there is an equal and opposite criticism. Jesus was perfect, and He was criticized. Why would we think we should be any exception?

B. Jesus promised us that the world would hate those who followed Him (John 15:18-19). Add to that group a small but vocal minority of people who reside within nearly every church. Percentage wise they are few, but they can stir up an angry mob in an instant.

C. We may wonder how someone can regularly attend church and be so critical. The reason is because if you are living for Jesus Christ and doing His will, Satan isn't happy about it.

D. He will incite critical people wherever he can find them, to discourage you because he wants to stop your work for the Lord.

VIII. Exposition [Part VII] - Reason # 6 -

Some criticize because a real fault needs correcting.

A. You may generally agree with the first five reasons covered so far, but please, consider Reason # 6.

B. As much as some might hate to admit it, all of us have faults. These are blind spots we may not see, so sometimes God brings someone who cares about us, to lovingly reveal them.

C. We must be humble enough as we trust the Lord, and not confuse those who are sincerely concerned about us, with those who are overly critical. God can use both to reveal matters that need correcting.

How to Respond to Criticism

IX. Exposition [Part VIII] - **First** -

View your critics as being sent by God

"And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head."

(2 Samuel 16:5,9)

A. When Shimei cursed David, Abishai wanted to cut off his head. But listen to what David told Abishai - "And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden (i.e., allowed) him." **(2 Samuel 16:11)**

B. Why did David tell Abishai to not take revenge? It was because David viewed his critics as being sent by God.

C. I wouldn't view this as David actually believing that God had caused Shimei to curse him, but rather, the Lord had allowed the criticism to occur for a reason.

D. Shimei used his hands to cast stones at the king (v13), but David also saw God's hand in the situation.

E. When someone criticizes us, the first thing we should ask is, "Lord, what are you trying to teach me through this?" It will help us handle the criticism if we view the person as being sent by God,

to teach us something, rather than seeing the critic as someone to afflict us.

F. Jesus taught us how to respond to our critics when He said, **"Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets."** (Luke 6:22,23)

G. Receiving hate, ostracism, and insults from others is not a joyful experience. But what did Jesus tell us to do? Lose our joy? **NO**, leap for joy!

H. Why? Because our reward is great in heaven.

X. **Exposition [Part IX] - Second -**

Find the grain of truth in the criticism

A. Many times, a grain of truth is buried in what the critic is saying.

B. Shimei cursed David of being judged by God for the bloodshed on the house of Saul. He assumed that the Lord had given the kingdom to Absalom because David was evil (2 Samuel 16:8). That's why Shimei was so arrogant. He thought David was out of the way for good and would never be king, He was wrong!

C. Most of what he said wasn't true, but there was one truth mixed in with his lies. David was a man of bloodshed. Because of this, Solomon was assigned to complete the task of building the temple (1 Chron. 2:7-8; 28:3).

XI. Exposition [Part X] - **Third** -

Don't counter-criticize your critics

- A. Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War, once asked General Robert E. Lee to give his opinion of another military officer.
- B. General Lee praised the man and told what a wonderful job he had done.
- C. A man who was present overheard him and said, "General, don't you know that the man of whom you speak so highly is one of your bitterest enemies and misses no opportunity to slander you?"
- D. General Lee answered, "Yes, but the President asked my opinion of him. He didn't ask his opinion of me."
- E. When we receive criticism, it's easy to lower ourselves to the critics level and counter-criticize.
- F. David could have had Abishai cut off Shimei's head, but he didn't. Instead of returning insult for insult (1 Peter 3:9), we must learn to absorb criticism and false accusations without retaliating.
- G. Jesus didn't counter-criticize His critics, "Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Peter 2:23).
- H. Jesus did this as an example for us to follow in his steps. "for even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (1 Peter 2:21)

XII. Exposition [Part XI] - Fourth -

Don't allow critics to discourage you.

A. If we know that we are in God's will and have corrected exposed faults, then we must not allow the critics to discourage us. We must continue to in the work that the Lord has called us to do.

B. I have one last story for you. Christopher Wren, who rebuilt Saint Paul's Cathedral and much of London after the Great Fire of 1666, was invited to design a new town hall in Windsor.

C. When he submitted his plan, a member of the town council insisted that the roof required better support and he wanted extra pillars added.

D. Wren, the greatest architect in the region, argued that his planned structure was perfectly safe. But the politician was adamant and spread alarm throughout the community, pressuring Wren to add the supports.

E. Many years later, when both the builder and politician were dead, repairs, and cleaning were performed on the hall.

F. The workers were surprised to find that, invisible from the floor below, the extra columns Wren put in were two inches short of touching the roof!

G. Wren knew that his building would stand, in spite of what the critics had said. He refused to allow them to shake his confidence in what he knew was true.

XIII. Summary

A. Perhaps criticism has discouraged you. Perhaps it has kept you from doing what you know is true. Here is the bottom line - **you must please God**, not men.

B. On the Judgment Day, it won't be the critics evaluating your life. It will be Almighty God.

It is once again interactive time. Please fill in the blanks spaces below to complete the biblical verses. As usual, all Scriptures have been taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible.

"Blessed are they which are _____ for _____ sake: for theirs is the _____ of heaven."

[Matthew 5:10]

"Then Peter and the _____ answered and said, We _____ to _____ God rather than _____."

[Acts 5:29]

"Judge not, that ye be not _____. For with what _____ ye judge, ye shall be _____: and with what _____ ye _____, it shall be _____ to you again."

[Matthew 7:1,2]

"Therefore thou art _____, O man,
whosoever thou art that _____: for wherein thou
_____ another, thou _____ thyself; for thou
that _____ doest the same things."

[Romans 2:1]

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Coping With The Critics

- Ask God what He is trying to teach you through the criticism you are receiving.
- Correct any fault the critics expose.
- Pray for every person who is criticizing you.

I sincerely pray that this lesson has been a blessing to you and will be a source of encouragement when you are faced with criticism. Thank you for your participation.

Jude 3

Pastor Austin