

Do You Have A Critical Spirit?

Romans 14:10 "Why do you criticize and pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you look down upon or despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.

(12) And so each of us shall give an account of himself - give an answer in reference to judgment - to God.

(13) Then let us no more criticize and blame and pass judgment on one another, but rather decide and endeavor never to put a stumbling block or an obstacle or a hindrance in the way of a brother." (The Amplified Bible)

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines criticism as "an act of criticizing; to judge as a critic; to find fault; to blame or condemn."

As we have read, the scriptures tell us not to tear down our brethren through criticism or judgment, as this can pose a serious stumbling-block and cause irreparable damage to their faith.

Among God's warnings to us in scripture, there are none more somber or serious than His warning to not become a stumbling block to His followers. "...whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:6).

There's an old saying that "We tend to

judge others by their actions, and we judge ourselves by our intentions." The truth is, we cannot rightly judge anyone else, because we do not know the contents of their heart. We should be content to judge only ourselves and seek to bring our own lives in alignment with God's Word (1 Cor. 11:31).

What Exactly Is A Critical Spirit?

A "critical spirit," is an obsessive attitude of criticism and fault-finding, which seeks to tear others down -- not the same thing as what is sometimes called "constructive criticism." The only criticism that is ever constructive is that which is expressed in love to "build up," not to tear down -- it is always expressed face-to-face, never behind their back.

The person with a critical spirit usually dwells on the negative, seeks for flaws rather than good. They're a complainer, usually always upset, and generally have a problem or a complaint about something. They often have little control over their tongue, their temper, and have tendencies for gossip and slander, which Paul said were sins "worthy of death" (Rom. 1:29-32).

What Causes A Critical Spirit?

1. Negativeness - A bad attitude and a negative view of life. A person may have unconfessed sin in their life (Rom. 2:1), or may harbor unforgiveness or bitterness toward someone who may have offended them (Heb. 12:15).

2. Insecurity - Criticism is often a subconscious means to "elevate one's own self image." By putting others down, they are inwardly trying to feel more important or that "they know more." Jealousy toward the spiritual victories of others is often the cause of criticism and belittling comments. Popular ministers of the Gospel are often the target of such tactics.

3. Immaturity - Believers must always keep their focus upon Christ and His Word, not man, who will often fail (Heb. 12:2). The young or immature believer who has not progressed very far in their own faith, remain overly dependent upon the faith of those within the body of Christ. Unfortunately, when they begin to notice the flaws in their brethren, subconsciously, this becomes a threat to their own sense of victory. Criticism becomes a reaction of disappointment, because their expectations in others have been crushed.

4. An Unrenewed Mind - Put-downs, making-fun-of, criticism, sarcasm are the world's ways of reacting to the faults of people. However, as Christians we don't behave this way. Our thinking and attitude should be renewed by the Word of God, which teaches us to bear the infirmities of the weak, to love, and show compassion and encouragement (Rom. 12:2).

5. The Devil - As we may realize, the Devil specializes in influencing obsessive behavior. He may use any or all of the above channels, or other techniques, to influence a complaining or critical attitude to stir up turmoil and strife within the body of Christ

(Eph. 6:12). We must be on guard that none of us would be used as a tool of the Devil to bring harassment or discouragement upon our brothers or sisters through continual criticism, as the Bible warns us not to "give place" to the Devil (Eph. 4:27). Remember that Satan is specifically called "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10). Are you an accuser of the brethren?

The Bible says that the reason that we are to come together as a church is, not to criticize, but to "exhort" (encourage) one another (Hebrews 10:25). "Cursing the darkness" won't change anything, but we must light a candle and "expose the light" of God's Word. By sharing the truth of God's Word, and encouraging people to live in its truth, people will change. Love and encouragement is a "motivational force."

If we ever hope to bring improvement in others, we need to become people of encouragement. This is the only attitude that will change people, and our actions and words must be devoted to encouraging the spiritual progress of our brethren.

The Christian's tongue should never be used for anything but good. "Let no foul or polluting language, nor evil word, nor unwholesome or worthless talk (ever) come out of your mouth; but only such speech as is good and beneficial to the spiritual progress of others, as is fitting to the need and the occasion, that it may be a blessing and give grace (God's favor) to those who hear it" (Eph. 4:29 The Amplified Bible).

Prescription For A Healthy Mind

A number of years ago, Dr. David H. Fink, a psychiatrist for the veterans administration, wrote an article for Coronet Magazine, entitled, "Release from Nervous Tension." In his article, he outlined his research into the causes of mental and emotional disturbances.

From over 10,000 case studies, he discovered that there was a common trait with all his patients who suffered from severe tension. They were habitual fault-finders, constant critics of people and things around them. Those who were free from tension, were the least critical. His conclusions were that the habit of fault-finding is a prelude or mark of the nervous, or the mentally unbalanced. Those who wish to retain good emotional and mental health, should learn to free themselves from a negative and critical attitude.

Remember this, the Bible doesn't promise peace to those who dwell on the faults of others! It says that the Lord will keep them in perfect peace, whose minds are stayed on Him! (Isaiah 26:3).

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