

Criticism – A Personal Journey: Part 1

by Moe Bechel

I am sure you know someone: {ponder these carefully}

- Who finds fault in those around them very easily, or
- Who seldom sees good in anything, or
- Who knows a better way to do almost everything, or
- Who has a story that will “top” yours every time, or
- Who seldom compliments someone else’s acts or accomplishments, or
- Who speaks harshly to others, or
- Who has criticized you personally.

A continual critical attitude causes relationships to deteriorate, and families to struggle.

A Church Split

About 20 years ago I experienced a “split” in a church in which I was actively involved. About two-thirds of the congregation left the church; most of them were my very close friends. (I will spare you the details for your sake, my sake, and the sake of our Lord.)

Accusations flew from both sides. Harsh words were said that created great hurt. Emotions were very high because people were wounded. It felt like a divorce because we were all like a family.

I struggled with the decision of staying or leaving because the people I loved were now in many different places. (Think about how a child of divorce feels.)

I stayed for several months after, but things got worse. Why? Because the pastor (who was also hurt by the harsh words) repeatedly criticized those who left the church.

And those who left continued to criticize the pastor.

Criticism Today

Let’s look at some definitions from Webster:

Critic – (Greek root word for “judge”) – one who possesses such knowledge that he (she) is a skilled judge. (i.e. a movie critic, a Broadway critic)

Critical – inclined to find fault;

Criticism – 1. the act or art of judging and defining something (a literary or artistic work);
2. an acute judgment, especially a disapproving judgment;

The original meaning of the word “critic” was for someone to look objectively at a person or situation and see the good, as well as what needed improvement.

So, criticism can be good when used – and received – properly.

Today however, criticism has taken on a negative attitude. Due to bad attitudes by either the critic or by the one being criticized, criticism is often not handled properly. As a result, “constructive criticism” has become an oxy-moron.

Examples of such are:

- * “Honey, the dinner is good, but...”
- * “You are doing a great job, but...”
- * “I love you, but...”

As soon as someone hears the word “but,” they know some negative comment is getting ready to be said about their performance. The “but” cancels the good of the preceding statement.

A Skilled Judge? - Or a Critical Spirit?

I can assure you that the critical words that preceded and followed the church split were NOT from “skilled” judges. The criticisms were based on opinions and emotions, and they had a devastating effect on the people involved, and on the community that the church served.

And this experience had a huge negative impact on me. After I left the church and searched for another, I visited several different churches - sitting in church services with a critical spirit.

"This church is too big."
"Pastor S does not seem to have a shepherd's heart."
"What is Pastor T's motive?"
"Why doesn't he tell me hello?"
"All he ever talks about is money."
"Does Pastor D think this is his church, or God's church?"
"I wonder what Pastor M is really like?"

No church that I visited was suitable. Because of the hurt I had experienced, a critical spirit ruled my thoughts toward churches and all pastors. AND it did not stop there!
My critical spirit overflowed into every area of my life – my job, my wife, my children, everywhere!

I was miserable. I could not find peace. I could not find God's will in my life. I lived discontented. And I made everyone around me miserable – for years.

Through prayer, God exposed the critical spirit I had developed, and through His ability I was able to overcome it.

A Familiar Spirit

However, over the last 20 years I occasionally find myself becoming critical. I can be in a conversation, and negative thoughts can take over. When I get hurt, the critical spirit soon reappears. Because a critical spirit controlled my life for a few years, it is a "familiar" spirit to me, and tries to come back in and take over my thought process again.

But I know personally the damage it has brought to close relationships and the misery it has created in my life.

I have to be on my guard to control my thought process. Yes, we can control our thoughts!

About Critical People

People can become critical from hurts (as described above), or from insecurity. An insecure person will put other people down so they feel better about themselves. Pride can also be a factor, where a person feels superior to others.

In all cases, a critical person is a negative person. And a negative person is a self-destructive person. They will destroy their own dreams, and the relationships that are important to them. They will themselves cancel the prayers they pray for loved ones by their negative attitude.

The Reality

People are not perfect. Everyone has flaws and shortcomings. We can always find something wrong with someone; something to criticize them about.

God can do the same with us. We all fall short of God's glory.

But God chooses to look past our faults, and be in intimate relationship with every one of us through His Son Jesus.

We also need to look at the GOOD in people – not focus on the bad and ugly.

To be Continued >>>

We will continue discussing criticism in **Criticism – A Personal Journey: Part 2** next month.

Moe Becnel

Blending A Family Ministry

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