

A Critical Spirit

Ask yourself!

- 1) Do you criticize and pass judgment on others?
- 2) Do you find yourself with a negative disposition, always finding fault with something or someone?
- 3) Is it difficult for you to see the positive in a person or a situation because the negative is so glaring in your eye?
- 4) Are you compelled to give your critical point of view for the good of all mankind?

If you answered yes to one of these questions, then you may have a critical spirit and you could be in danger. A critical spirit will hurt and destroy others. A critical spirit is a negative attitude of the heart that seeks to condemn, tear down, and destroy with words. A critical spirit creates blind spots in a person's heart and mind, making them to believe they are being constructive. In reality, the word of God characterizes it as ungodly.

Criticism is “*an act of criticizing; to judge as a critic; to find fault; to blame or condemn.*” Romans 14:10-13 tells us not to tear down fellow believers through criticism or judgment, because this can pose a stumbling block and cause serious damage to their faith. The Lord warns there is none more serious than in Matthew 18:6-9, 1 Peter 2:8 and which is becoming a stumbling block to His followers. This is something that continually comes to my mind on every situation. Many times I ask myself is this the best way to prove I am correct? Is this worth making this person stumble and fall?

Have you ever noticed: We tend to judge others by their **actions** and ourselves by our **intentions**? The truth is, we can't rightly judge anyone else's soul, because we don't have an ability to really see in the heart. That is to say, we don't know the motivations 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 is a critical spirit? A “*critical spirit,*” is an obsessive attitude of criticism and fault-finding, which seeks to tear down others rather than build up. *Destructive criticism* is different from *constructive feedback*. The only criticism that is ever constructive is that which speaks the truth IN love, to build up, help or edify another person for their good and for God's glory. A critical spirit dwells on the negative, looks for flaws rather than positive qualities in others. They are constantly complaining or criticizing and they are usually upset with something or somebody. They often do little to control their tongue, their temper and have tendencies for gossip, slander, strife and malice (Romans 1:29-32).

4 Types of Critical Spirits

1. GOSSIPER

A gossip is one who reveals secrets going about as a talebearer. They have privileged information about people and they reveal that information to others with sinfulness. A Gossiper attempts to make themselves significant to those around them to be the source of knowledge.

1 Timothy 5:13—And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

Proverbs 11:13—A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter

Proverbs 20:19—He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips

2. SLANDERER

A slanderer is a person who makes false statements in order to damage a person's reputation. They do not care about the truth or correcting an error. A slanderer intends to inflict harm.

Proverbs 10:18—He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.

Proverbs 16:28—A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

1 Peter 2:1—Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings

3. JUDGMENTALISM

A judgmental person has an exclusive critical point of view, they have a tendency to judge very harshly. They lack having empathy for others' viewpoint because they believe their point of view is the right one. They believe they have the ability to know others' motives. They have an amazing skill to point out others' mistakes, while minimizing their own.

Matthew 7:1-2— Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

James 2:13 - For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment

4. COMPLAINER

A complainer is a person who is habitually negative about others and the circumstances of life in general. They are seen more as discontented and ungrateful.

James 5:9—Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

Philippians 2:14—Do all things without murmurings and disputings

What Are the Causes of a Critical Spirit?

These factors which aren't exclusive and there can be more factors. Consider some important factors that may be contributing to the critical spirit:

1. **Our Sinful Flesh** – It is referred in the word of God as "*the flesh*." A critical person is *walking in the flesh* and not the Spirit. Rather than drawing on God for strength and perspective, the critical person relies upon their own resources in thoughts or emotions. This cynical nature lessens our faith and quenches the Spirit of God, causing us to live based on negative feelings, not faith. God's people will always be optimistic and full of hope because they know and love this great and gracious God. Opposite is the outlook of

the “*the flesh*” will be one of despair. Apart from Christ, we have no realistic basis for hope at all, (John 15:5; Phil. 4:13; 1 Cor. 15:58).

2. **Poor Self-Concept:** It’s been saying that, “*Hurting people hurt people.*” This is demonstrably true. Many other sayings, such as “*Misery Loves Company.*” When you meet people who are constantly critical, you can be pretty much see that they’re suffering from a poor self-concept. They see themselves as unattractive, failing, or in some manner unworthy, perhaps they even condemn themselves many times. They work to find faults to keep us from seeing theirs, which is a short coming in feeling and dealing with our own pain and shortcomings.
3. **Little to no Grace:** A critical person has experienced little or no grace from God. It’s far easier to see others’ sins than our own. Judgmental people are not interested in God’s perspective on their own ugly failures, or with God’s incredible gift of forgiveness. Have we honestly faced our sin and experienced God’s grace? Have you ever wept over your sins? When you see the sins of others, are you aware that you are just as capable of the very things they do, were God to withdraw His grace from you? There by the grace of God go I.
4. **Pessimism or Negativity:** A negative emotional focus, a bad attitude or a negative, cynical, secular view of life. A negative person may have unconfessed sin in his life (Romans 2:1). There are some individuals who are so negative they justify themselves as the, “*devil’s advocate.*” It seems that no matter what opinion you have, they’ll take the opposite and argue with you.
5. **Insecurity:** Criticism is often a conscious or subconscious means to “*elevate one’s own self-esteem or self-image.*” By putting others down, they’re inwardly trying to build themselves up by feeling more important or appearing more knowledgeable. Envy of the good fortune of others is often the cause of a critical attitude and/or action. Preachers can be guilty of this as well and divide God’s people as a result. We need to learn to rejoice with those who rejoice and to be pleased for the good fortune of others.
6. **Immaturity:** Believers must always keep their faith focused upon Christ and His Word, not on others who will invariably disappoint (Heb. 12:2). Immature believers haven’t progressed very far in their faith and are perhaps are too dependent upon the faith of other Christians. Unfortunately, when they begin to notice the flaws or shortcomings in others, this becomes a subconscious threat to their own faith and walk. Criticism becomes a reaction in disappointment, because of their unrealistic expectations in others.
7. **An Unrenewed Mind:** Put-downs, making fun of, criticism, sarcasm are the world’s ways of reacting to the faults of others. Paul says that our thinking and attitude should be regularly renewed by God’s Word, which teaches us to bear the infirmities of the weak, to love, show compassion and offer encouragement (Rom. 12:2).
8. **A Root of Bitterness** this develops when we fail to obtain the grace of God to forgive. When we fail to forgive others we become angry, bitter and resentful, not better. Hebrews 12:15: *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.* Such people develop a negative emotional by focusing and harboring bitterness or resentment toward the one who has offended them. Our ability to live harmonious lives is largely related to our willingness and ability to forgive and to ask for forgiveness.
9. **Bad Company and Environment:** The reality is, for better or worse, we become like those with those we associate with. Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15: 33, we should not be deceived, bad company ruins good morals and corrupts good character. When you

aspire to be better and hand around those that are not over time, they can have an adverse influence on you and pull you down into their negativity.

What Are the Cures For Conquering the Causes of a Critical Spirit?

Since many causes contributing to a critical spirit, the cures must be in turn related to the causes:

1. If the cause of a critical spirit is a life style based on living by our sinful selfish nature, we need to cultivate our new nature and learn to be controlled by the Holy Ghost. Galatians 5:16: *I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.* Ephesians 5:18b: *but be filled with the Spirit;*
2. If the cause of a critical spirit is a poor self-concept based of our works, we need to cultivate a healthy self-concept based upon God's grace, not our works. 1 Cor. 15:10: *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*
3. If the cause of a critical spirit is that we have experienced little or no grace from God, we need to humble ourselves before God, confess, repent of our sins and ask for His forgiveness. James 4:6: *But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*
4. If the cause of a critical spirit is our insecurity due in large measure to lack of self-acceptance, we need to learn to accept God's acceptance of us and find safety in God's love for us. Apostle Paul was persuaded and said let nothing separate us from the love of God, found in Jesus Christ our Lord.
5. If the cause of a critical spirit is a negative emotional focus or negative worldview, we need to learn to see God's view of Jesus and not from a worldly secular point of view. 2 Corinthians 5:16: *Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.* When we are emotional and need to focus on better things, Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:8: *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these thing*
6. If the cause of a critical spirit is immaturity resulting from an improper faith focus, we need to learn to focus our faith on the sacrifice of Christ and God's promises to us. We need to not become stagnate but to grow up in the Lord. Hebrews 12:2-3: *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God; For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.* Eph 4:15 *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*
7. If the cause of a critical spirit is an un-renewed mind based on the world's ways of reacting, we need to submit ourselves to God and be daily transformed by the renewing of our minds. Romans 12:1-2: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*
8. If the cause of a critical spirit is a root of bitterness, this is due to a lack of forgiveness on our part, we need God's grace by forgiving others as God for Christ's sake forgave us.

Ephesians 4:32 *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

9. If the cause of a critical spirit is the result of our associations with an unhealthy peer group, we need to associate with those who have godly values and a positive mental attitude. 1 Cor. 15:33 *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*

Overcoming a Critical Spirit

Overcoming a critical spirit can be difficult because it develops into a life-dominating sin. It becomes a way of life. The way to rid ourselves of a critical heart is simply to put on love instead of hate, to build up instead of tearing down and to give grace instead of grief.

1) LOVE INSTEAD OF HATE

As stated before, God commands us to love Him and to love others. The simplest way to work on this is to, stop feeding the flesh and start feeding the spirit. There is so many scriptures in the word that continually says, we are to put off and all things we are to put on. 1 Peter 3:9 *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

2) BUILDING UP INSTEAD OF TEARING DOWN

A critical spirit naturally tears down, but as believers, we are called to edify others. In Romans 15:2 Apostle Paul instructs us; *Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.* We once were dead but now as a believer we should be among the living. Romans 14:9 *For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.* A person with a critical spirit must be renewed in the spirit of their mind. We are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and should edify that. 1 Corinthians 14:26 *How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.*

3) GIVING GRACE INSTEAD OF GIVING GRIEF

As believers, our words and our lives are to be a reflection of God's grace. We are to give grace to others instead of the grief that comes from a critical spirit. Ephesians 4:29 says, *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.* Our words are to be encouraging, uplifting and instructive even when it is a corrective word. *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*-Ephesians 4:32

In the end Apostle Paul tells really where to focus our minds to help us be that same mind of Christ. He said in Philippians 4:8-9: *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you*