

Critical spirit: Changing the Heart of a Critic!

Anyone with a critical spirit is an expert at finding faults and focusing on them. Unfortunately, faultfinders seldom find anything else! Piles of mud balls are scattered throughout their ditch of disapproval, and at the opportune moment...ready...aim...fire. They pop up and hurl one derogatory comment after another.

A critical spirit does not reflect the heart of the wise, nor does it reflect the heart of God. Jesus said, “out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.” (Matthew 12:33-37)

Matthew 12:33–37 (HCSB):	Matthew 12:33–37 (NKJV):	1 Thess. 5:14–15 (HCSB)
<p>33. “Either make the tree good and its fruit good or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.</p> <p>34. Brood of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.</p> <p>35. A good man produces good things from his storeroom of good, and an evil man produces evil things from his storeroom of evil. 36. I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak. 37. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”</p>	<p>33. ¶ “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.</p> <p>34. “Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.</p> <p>35. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.</p> <p>36. “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.</p> <p>37. “For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”</p>	<p>14. And we exhort you, brothers: warn those who are irresponsible, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15. See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all.</p>

What is a critical spirit?

- A critical spirit is an excessively negative attitude with harshness in judging.
- A person with acritical spirit gives unfair criticism by faultfinding, nitpicking, carping, quibbling, and complaining.
- The Bible is clear about those who are judgmental:

“10. But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”

(Romans 14:10 NKJV)

What is a caring spirit?

- A caring spirit is a thoughtful, attentive attitude with a heart to help.
- One of the most important needs we all have is for someone to care about us, someone to be attentive to our dreams and disappointments, our joys and sorrows, our successes and failures, our strengths and weaknesses, our vices and virtues. How blessed we are when we have caring people in our lives!
- Those who care have a caring spirit reflect the heart of our caring Savior.

“The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble.

He cares for those who trust in him.”

Nahum 1:7

A Critical Spirit	Reference Scripture (s)	A Caring Spirit
Condemns the person as well as the action	Proverbs 12: 18	Condemns the action, not the person
Focuses on the faults of others	Luke 6: 41	Focuses on self-examination
Ridicules others	Proverbs 11: 12	encourages others
Makes judgments based on appearances	John 7: 24	Makes judgments based on the facts
Assumes the worst without first hearing from the accused	John 7: 51	Assumes the best while waiting to hear from the accused
Tears others down without seeing their unmet needs	Ephesians 4: 29	Builds others up according to their needs
Responds harshly when criticized or accused by others	Proverbs 13: 10	Responds appreciatively without quarreling when others give advice and seeks to correct personal misbehavior
Lacks mercy toward others	James 2:12-13	Responds with mercy towards others

From Where Does a Critical Spirit Originate?

A critical spirit most commonly is birthed in a home environment where criticism abounds, where parents model a critical spirit before their children. Then, after growing up in an atmosphere where criticism is daily fare, the child carries on this spirit into adulthood (see Proverbs 27: 3).

What Is the Root Cause of a Critical Spirit?

Isn't it interesting how shifting the blame to God or someone else is much easier than taking responsibility for our own wrong choices? We all have three inner needs love, significance, and security. Criticizing someone else makes us feel a sense of significance, a sense of power, at least for the moment. (1 Thess. 5:14-15).

Do I Change My Heart from Critical to Caring?

Perhaps you've been convicted of call caustic criticism, and you no longer want to be a "ditch dweller," slinging your derogatory mud. Begin now to climb out of the ditch *one kind word at a time* ... and you'll find yourself on the path to recovery and peace.

Identify your shortcomings (Psalm 139: 23-24)

- Humble your heart to see your own sins, your imperfections, and your immense need for God's mercy.
- Help others see their significance in God's eye.
- Pray, "Lord, may I see my sin as you see it; may I hate my sin as you hate it."
- Look closely at the life of Christ to learn his compassionate way of confronting the truth.
- Pray that you will not be a critical stone thrower, but a compassionate need meter.

Draw out the heartfelt needs of others (proverbs 20: 5)

- Don't listen only to what people say on the surface. Listen for the needs and feelings beneath the surface feelings of being unloved or feeling insignificant or insecure.
- Pray that God will give you a discerning spirit as you seek to draw others out.

Offer acceptance to others (Romans 15: 7)

- realize that anyone has an innate fear of rejection and a deep yearning for acceptance.
- Choose to be a channel through which God and extends his acceptance to others.

See the God-given worth in others (Luke 12: 6-7)

- Treat every person, especially the one most problematic to you, as someone with God-given worth. The truth judges our hearts, attitudes, and actions toward others.
- Pray that God will not allow you to despise anyone whom He created and loves.

Praise the positive in others (Philippians 4:8)

- Avoid the temptation to try catch people doing something wrong, Instead, comment on what they are doing right.
- Pray that you will see something positive in every person, then faithfully make that your focus.
- Pray that you would see others as God sees them and value them as He values them.

Refuse to wound others with words (Colossians 3:16)

- Consider the fallacy of saying, “talk is cheap.” Talk is costly when it is tearing others down. Prayerfully consider the possibility that what you are criticizing in someone may be something God wants to deal with directly, and that God may want you to pray and remain silent.
- Before speaking words of criticism, ask a wise friend to evaluate the content and tone of your words, realize that after critical words are spoken, you can never take them back.
- Inspire those who need to change by sharing with them your belief that they can change. Encourage them by saying, “Don’t give up. Trust God to guide you in the ways you should go. I know you can make the right decisions. I believe you can experience God’s best.
- Present your words to God as His instrument for good and pray that He will put His words into your mouth.

See the unmet needs of others (Philippians 4:19)

- Instead of judging the inappropriate acts of others, seek to understand the needs behind each action.
- Realize that people who speak forth cutting words reveal that they have unmet inner needs; (for love, significance, or security).
- Realize that people don’t always mean what they say nor understand their own deepest needs.
- Pray that your critics will allow the Lord to meet their deepest inner needs.

Rely on God’s word and God’s spirit for wisdom

- Seek God’s wisdom by reading a chapter a day from the book of Proverbs.
- Write down every verse in Proverbs that pertain to the tongue. Check your words against this list and see if you are being wise with what you say.
- See God at work in every circumstance and trust Him for wisdom to know how to respond (wisdom is the ability to look at life from God’s point of view).
- Pray that God’s Spirit will teach you spiritual truths and lead you to speak these truths in love.

“This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”

1Corinthians 2:13)