**RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CRITICS**

Sunday School Lesson 16

*Building Right Relationships*

Matthew 5:11

6/25/2023

**Introduction:** For Father’s Day last week, we looked at the relationship of a child and his father. Primarily, we looked at principles of fatherhood that should help us in better understanding a father. The first thing we observed is that we must understand that fathers are the glory of their children. Children look up to their dad, and a dad passes on his name and reputation to his child. Secondly, we must understand that the role of the father is given great importance in God’s Word. The Lord speaks of the affliction of those who are fatherless. The role of a father is vital in the home, and many problems in society today are a result of a lack of a father in the home. Thirdly, we must understand that a foolish child causes shame, reproach, and a lack of joy for his father. A foolish child is considered a personal failure to a Godly father. Fourthly, we must understand the special relationship between a father and a son. The father provides instruction and an example to his son to prepare him for fatherhood. If the father doesn’t set the example to his son, who is going to take the lead in doing so? Finally, we must understand the special relationship that exists between a father and his daughter. He should be an example to her of the love and provision that she can expect to receive from a Godly husband. Moving forward to today’s lesson, we are going to be looking at the relationship that we have with those who are our critics. Dealing with those who are critical of us can be especially difficult; thus, it is important for us to understand how to properly handle such individuals in a Biblical manner.

1. **AS A CHRISTIAN, YOU SHOULD EXPECT TO BE CRITICIZED. DO NOT LET A CRITIC TAKE YOU BY SURPRISE WITH THEIR CRITICISM.**

* Luke 7:31 And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? 32 They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. 33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. 34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! 35 But wisdom is justified of all her children. The Lord Jesus rebuked those in the days of His earthly ministry because they were critical of both Him and John the Baptist. When it came to John, he was too serious for them. When it came to Jesus, they said that He was gluttonous. They said He was a friend of publicans and sinners. All throughout Jesus’ earthly ministry, He faced criticism from the religious leaders of the day. Likewise, Jesus warned His disciples that those same critics would follow them. He told them that they would speak the same way about the servants that they do about the master (Matthew 10:24-25). As believers, we should not be surprised when criticism comes to us. Some Christians live in fear of the criticism of others. Christ says to fear them not.

1. **AS A SINNER, EVERY ONE OF US IS DESERVING OF AT LEAST SOME CRITICISM. IF WE CANNOT ACCEPT THIS, THEN IT SPEAKS TO THE PRIDE IN OUR HEART.**

* Matthew 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 1 Corinthians 6:7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Proverbs 13:1 A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke. Proverbs 21:24 Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath. Christians ought not to be so prideful to think that the only reason we receive criticism is because of our relationship with the Lord. The reality is that every one of us is worthy of criticism. To criticize simply means to indicate the faults of someone in a disapproving way. Who among us is without any fault? The truth is that we regularly need criticism. We need someone to confront our faults and let us know that they are not acceptable. The idea that there should never be any criticism is totally based in pride. Of course, we ought to be considerate of what the Bible says when it comes to confront others about their faults. We must be willing to deal with our own faults. Some people are great at criticism but absolutely refuse to receive any criticism. The Lord is the only One unworthy of criticism.

1. **WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF CRITICISM THAT MAY COME:**
2. ***There may be criticism that is based in truth but lacking in its understanding.*** *Acts 11:*2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3 saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. After Peter interacted with Cornelius, he was criticized for eating with him. While the criticism was factually correct, it was lacking in understanding. Peter then took the time to explain to them that the Lord had led him to go and see Cornelius. These men then realized that they were wrong to criticize. We must be careful in criticism to make sure that we have proper understanding, and we must be willing to hear the matter. On the other hand, when we are criticized in like manner, consider whether an explanation may be warranted and helpful to resolve the criticism. If the person is a scorner, then it will not be profitable to explain the matter to him.
3. ***There may be criticism that is based in truth but presented in an uncomfortable way or given by a difficult person.*** John 8:44a Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. Matthew 21:12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, (Num 22) The second type of criticism to consider is that which is true but also may appear to us as especially harsh. There are many people who will not hear criticism if it is given in an uncomfortable way or by a person who they do not respect or agree with. A wise man will not turn away a critic solely based upon the harshness of the criticism. In truth, we see that Jesus Christ Himself gave criticism that undoubtedly appeared as harsh to those in that day. If the criticism is based in truth and proper understanding, then it ought to be received and considered by the hearer. Don’t reject correction based on its “niceness.”
4. ***There may be criticism that is based in truth but ultimately deals with matters of personal opinion or decisions that don’t pertain to the critic.*** 1 Corinthians 10:29 conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man’s conscience? 30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? James 1:19 - Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: Criticism that is based in truth but deals with matters of personal opinions can be especially challenging for Christians to navigate. Scripturally, we have liberty to disregard such opinions, but we must also balance this with prudence and wisdom in listening to counsel that others have to offer. We might find that the criticism is helpful in some way in our Christian walk if we thoughtfully consider it. If nothing else, we may gain a friend or some personal humility through the practice of receiving criticism that deals primarily with one’s opinion.
5. ***There may be criticism that is generally not based on the truth but contains some truth that may be valuable to the person criticized.*** 2 Samuel 16:7 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: 8 the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man. When King David was under attack by Absalom, he was met with the criticism of a man named Shimei. This man wrongly criticized David for what had happened to the house of Saul, and he took delight in the failure that was now facing David. While Shimei’s criticism was generally wrong, he did make a valid point about David’s situation being the result of him being a bloody man. After all, it was his murder of Uriah that initiated all of David’s family problems. David wisely chose to deal with the criticism and not punish the critic Shimei, even though Shimei was a fool who did not understand what was happening.
6. ***There may be criticism that it not based on the truth and is intended to disparage or control the person who is being criticized.*** Nehemiah 2:19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? 20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem. (1 Samuel 17:28) Nehemiah had to deal with a tough critic named Sanballat. This man did not want the work to be done in Jerusalem, and he made it his mission to criticize Nehemiah and the Jews for what was being done. David also had to deal with criticism from his brother Eliab. The only proper way to deal with such a critic is to cast off their criticism and continue to do the work that the Lord is leading you to do.