**RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CRITICS**

Sunday School Lesson 17

*Building Right Relationships*

Matthew 5:11

7/2/2023

**Introduction:** Last week, we examined one of the hardest relationship that we have to deal with in life – the relationship with our critics. Today, we are going to continue looking at the dynamics of this relationship, but we should first review the principles that we covered in the previous lesson. In the lesson, we learned that as a Christian, you should expect to be criticized. We cannot let a critic take us by surprise with their criticism. If the world criticized the perfect Son of God, then they will certainly criticize His imperfect followers. Jesus warns us that the criticism will take place. As sinners, we also understand that every one of us is deserving of at least some criticism. If we cannot accept this, then it speaks to the pride that we have in our heart. All of us have received criticism that we were most definitely worthy of receiving. The last point of the lesson was that we need to understand the different forms of criticism that may come. There’s truthful criticism that lacks in its understanding. There’s truthful criticism that is presented to us in an uncomfortable way. There’s also truthful criticism that deals with matters of personal opinions or decisions that don’t pertain to the critic. There’s criticism that is generally not truthful, but it may contain some truth that is valuable to the person being criticized. Lastly, there’s criticism that is untruthful and is meant as a way to disparage or discourage the person who is being criticized. With these thoughts in mind, we are going to focus our attention today on the motivations of the critic. This will help us better understand how to deal with them.

1. **SOME CRITICS THRIVE ON THE BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL CONTROL THAT THEY CAN HAVE OVER THE PERSON THAT THEY ARE CRITICIZING.**

* Acts 16:20 and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, Acts 6:13 and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: Proverbs 29:25 The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe. As we consider the motivation for criticism, we need to understand that some people criticize for the purpose of creating behavioral or emotional control over an individual. Some people criticize without expectation of change on behalf of the person criticized, but there are other times where people criticize because they know that it will produce a behavioral change. Why did the Jewish leaders criticize the early church. They were hopeful to have control over these Christians. They knew that they could not stand up to the truth of their message. They were hopeful of emotional control that comes through fear. How many people are controlled through the fear of criticism from their critics? Additionally, how many people allow their critics to continue to produce emotional reactions in them? With the exception of an authoritative critic or our obedience to the truth, we ought to be thoughtful about the control that we give over to those who criticize us.

1. **SOME CRITICS THRIVE ON CRITICISM BECAUSE IT ALLOWS THEM TO VOCALIZE THEIR GENERAL DISCONTENTMENT WITH LIFE, THAT PERSON, OR A SITUATION.**

* Exodus 5:21 and they said unto them, The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us. 14:11 And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Numbers 16:41 But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord. We see that people often criticize simply because they are miserable. They are discontent, and it feels good to be able to direct that discontentment toward a particular person. There’s no greater example of this in the Bible than the children of Israel and Moses. We find the Israelites criticizing Moses any time there was something negative that happened to them. Overall, they were a group of discontented people who voiced all of their discontentment against their leader. You will find that there are some critics who thrive on criticism because they are simply miserable people. It seems that their misery inclines them to want others to be miserable with them, or their misery inclines the critic to see nothing but the negative in everybody else. Either way, we must be careful not to give in to their miserable disposition.

1. **SOME CRITICS THRIVE ON CRITICISM BECAUSE IT DEFLECTS FROM THEIR OWN FAILURES AND WORTHINESS OF CRITICISM.**

* Genesis 3:12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. Luke 11:38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. 39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. 40 Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? Another motivation behind criticism is often the need for the critic to deflect away from his own failures and worthiness of criticism. Look at the fall of man first as an example. Adam seems to point the finger toward the Lord when he was confronted with his disobedience and eating of the fruit. According to Adam, it was because of the woman whom the Lord had given to him. Jesus observed the same with the behavior of the Pharisees. They criticized the Lord because they did not want attention to their own behavior. Many backsliders do the same today. They seem to blame and criticize everyone else as a distraction effort away from why they are living worldly lives with little regard for obedience to God and His Word.

1. **SOME CRITICS THRIVE ON CRITICISM BECAUSE OF A SELFISH NEED FOR ATTENTION.**

* 3 John 9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. (Numbers 16) The Bible gives us an example of a critic in Diotrephes who criticized primarily for the selfish reasons. He desired to have the preeminence among the church. Clearly, he did not like the attention and respect that John and others were getting from the church. His response was to use malicious words (criticism) to tear down Godly men and to direct the attention back to himself. Someone who is critical naturally demands respect from others. That’s because their criticism tells others that they know better or would do better than the person that they are criticizing. That’s why people often foolishly follow behind a critic like the children of Israel followed behind Korah. Consequently, it’s important for us not to give unnecessary attention to a critic who does not have the Biblical authority to give such criticism. We validate their position when we give them attention, and it pushes the critic to issue out even further criticism of others.

1. **SOME CRITICS THRIVE ON CRITICISM BECAUSE THEY ARE IDLE, AND IT GIVES THEM SOMETHING TO FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION AND EFFORT ON.**

* 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. 2 Thess. 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. Some of the biggest critics in the world are those who seemingly have done little or have very little to do. The apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, dealt with this on multiple occasions in the New Testament. He spoke of the dangers of some of the young widows who were lacking in something to do. He advised that their idleness could lead them to become tattler and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. This seems to speak to the potential that idleness has to lead people to become critics. Why is that the case? I believe that the reason is that being idle gives us time to observe all of the problems that we see in others. We must not let those who are not doing anything distract us from getting the work done.