

**For the Love of the Family Ministries
Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family
For the Love of the Family Series
Do You Have a Critical Spirit?
Pastor Terry L. Coomer
Ministry of Elwood Bible Baptist Church
P.O. Box 535
504 North 12th Street
Elwood, Indiana 46036
765-552-1973
TLCOOMER@juno.com
www.fortheloveofthefamily.com**

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Do You Have A Critical Spirit?

Matthew 7:1-5, "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. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye: and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye".

John 7:24, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment".

After many years as a Pastor I find that many sincere Christians do not understand what Biblical judgment is. Sadly, many Christians who sincerely desire to seek to rear their children for the Lord fail to do so, because they do not understand Biblical judgment and therefore, instead teach their children to have a critical spirit. While many well meaning Christians believe in their heart they are standing for what is right, because they fail to understand Biblical judgment, they have taught their children to have a critical spirit without understanding the spiritual damage they have done. When the children leave the home they do not live for God and in fact in many instances turn on their parents with a critical spirit and the parent is devastated because they sincerely do not understand where they went wrong.

First of all let me say, I believe in standing for what is right, Biblical separation and practice it. However, there are Biblical guidelines that should be practiced in the matter.

Years ago, after studying every Bible passage that deals with marriage and child rearing, my wife and I decided to home school our children, because we understood from the scripture it was our responsibility to bring them up in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord”, Ephesians 6:4. We highly recommend home schooling. Let me say to you as a parent, just because you decide to home school your children, does not mean they will leave your house and serve the Lord. Our responsibility as a Christian parent is to encourage and teach our children to have an intimate, personal, passionate relationship with the Lord. The sadness is that many folks have been deceived in thinking that in their desire to stand for what is right that we teach by their own example to have an ugly, critical spirit. I have found that many of these folks believe they are like Elijah of old “that I even I only, am left”, I Kings 19:10.

Folks Elijah had just had the greatest victory of his life and a day later he was living in discouragement, defeat, and despair running away and hiding by himself. He had a spirit about him that was not godly here. God asks him twice, Elijah, “What doest thou here”? I Kings 19:9, 13. When God asks a question twice he normally asks it because he did not like the answer the first time. Elijah’s answer was all about what he had done to stand for God and how spiritual he was and no one else is left and I am the only one.

People with a critical spirit are walking alone, are miserable and in their pride and arrogance will continue to tell you how they have stood for God. Their pride and arrogance makes them feel like they are really standing for God. The question I always ask someone who has the Elijah syndrome is, “What are you doing for the cause of Christ?” Generally the answer is like Elijah’s answer. Unfortunately, it is the wrong answer that will affect many others.

Many times folks have lived this way so long they have allowed a spirit of bitterness to well up in their heart, Hebrews 3:12-13. Verse 13 here tells us, “But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today”. Folks you will not exhort anyone including your children and spouse to really walk with God if you are in verse 12 here “with an evil heart of unbelief”. Hebrews 12:15 is where a critical spirit starts. “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”. I hope you see the issue. Bitterness in your heart will cause many to be defiled including your spouse and children and it will affect many others as well. In essence, whoever they come in contact with.

If you will remember, I said earlier a person with a critical spirit is not out to encourage others to walk with God, they do not want to exhort anyone else, they want to prove they are right at the exclusion of all else. Do not misunderstand, God does want us to stand for what is right, but he wants our relationship with him to be right. The motivation behind the stand is where the answer lies.

Hebrews 12:15 explains it very well, “Looking diligently (at who or what? the answer is me), lest any man fail of the grace of God”. How do you fail at the grace

of God? “Lest any root of bitterness” gets in your life. To get this out of course you have to pull it out by the root and that is not an easy task.

Folks, I am convinced much damage has been done to our children, spouses and others lives by the “root of bitterness”. Let me give you an example, I am thankful for godly mothers, but I have also found that some mothers who decide they are going to rear their children for God, which is an admirable desire, are doing so with the wrong motivation. In my travels in preaching and teaching on the family, I have found some pretty ungodly spirited mothers who are teaching their children to have a critical spirit. They think they are separated and spiritual. They dress right and have the right look, but internally there is a serious issue going on. (I believe in dressing properly as well). Generally, there is role reversal in the home and the wife is the spiritual leader and she is in control. She also wants you to believe that she is a humble person, who is in submission to her husband, Pastor and is teachable. The farthest thing in the world is true. “Many are being defiled” her husband and her children, other church members. etc. Through her critical spirit teaching, her children leave the home and do not serve God and she is devastated. In essence what she wanted to accomplish and took many hours, days, and years to try to do and sacrificed to do failed, because of the “root of bitterness” in her life.

Quite frankly, if you approach her about any issue she is not comfortable with she immediately attacks you and you are not a spiritual person, and we have to separate from them. “Thereby many be defiled”. Internally, she is a miserable discouraged person, like Elijah, who is constantly in turmoil, but has decided she will stand by herself. In fact she is the only one standing!

The failure is truly understanding God’s plan and purpose and having a real spiritual relationship with God.

Let me give you a test here, and let’s see how we do? Maybe right now you are reading this and it is becoming uncomfortable. Your desire is to rear your children for the Lord, but you are finding yourself in my description. When was the last time you actually engaged a person in a conversation about their salvation? If you cannot remember or it has been quite a while or not all, then why not? A person with a “root of bitterness” “critical spirit” believes they are super spiritual but they rarely ever witness to anyone. They are standing for right, but they fail to see the world as God sees it. The world is lost and you have the answer. God desires us to have compassion on the lost. These are people for whom Christ died.

I think you remember the story of the Priest and the Levite, in the story of the Good Samaritan. They walked on by. They were spiritual people in their own eyes, but not in God’s. You see folks many of these people are really pretty miserable inside. They have no joy, and they are teaching their children that as well. God does not want us to walk on by. He wants us to have the joy of sharing our faith with others and seeing them come to Christ. Balance is the key word. How do you see people?

Do you see them as someone you do not want to get involved with or do you see them as someone for whom Christ died?

All of this goes back to what is happening in our heart and what our real relationship with Christ is. Do not misunderstand there are things we need to separate from and there are things we should not be involved in. However, it is the motivation of the heart that is the answer for this.

Some time ago, I ran across a mother like I mentioned above who had several children including teens and was home schooling her children. Looked right, talked right, but does not have a clue about what God's desire is. Through interaction I asked when the children got saved? No one could give a clear answer on that one. The children were not saved, but we are raising them for the Lord? How utterly absurd! Of course, she had a critical spirit, root of bitterness, and a non teachable attacking attitude. Some of the children had the same attitude as well. The husband did what the wife said to do. She was the spiritual leader of the home.

I suspect I have heard more people use Matthew 7:1 to justify sin in their life more than any other verse. "You know you should not judge". Or they use these verses to rationalize sin in the lives of others. Most generally, this is their children's lives, family members, or friends.

However, if the Scripture here is saying that we should not judge sin, then there is a load of Scripture we would have to throw out of the Bible. On the contrary God tells us to live for Christ and separate ourselves from those who will not live for Christ. By the way that takes spiritual judgment. II Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15, I Corinthians 11:31-32 and John 7:24.

The key to Matthew 7:1-5 is in I Corinthians 11:31. "The judgment of ourselves". Most of us have a real problem with that area. Quite frankly to have a real spiritual relationship with Christ we must do self judgment every day. Our responsibility is to make sure our relationship with God is correct. The devil is very subtle and he uses our own pride and old nature against us. We must be sure our heart is right before God daily.

Let me give you a thought that I hope is helpful. Every day before you start your day, ask God if there anything that stands between you and me today? When God shows you something that is standing between you and Him, confess the sin and ask God to help you not to have any root of bitterness in your heart. Quite frankly, not only is our own relationship with God at stake, but those we come in contact with.

Have you ever noticed the ugliness of a Christian with a critical spirit? Not a pretty sight. Surely, that is not where you wish to be.

Matthew 7:3, "And why beholdest thou the mote that is thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is on thine own eye? The question is what is the beam

here? The beam here folks is a critical spirit. This is the key to this section. You have met Christians who never think they have done very much wrong. However, they have constantly got something to say about other Christians or those in authority. In essence they are always looking for something. Matthew 7:3 tells us they cannot see the sin of their own life.

Let me mention here that if you really want God to work in your life and you desire that, you will see things about your life you do not like. Spiritual growth and maturity says I will judge my own life. Immaturity says I will judge the life of others without first looking at my own life. Many times God shows folks the need of their life and the changes that must be made and they reject that. But in their rejection of what God shows them they will judge another. They will not see the need they have. Thus the beam that is in their own eye. That beam is a critical spirit that comes from a heart that has the root of bitterness. Notice the promise of God in this matter in, Matthew 7:2. Your life will be judged in the same manner as you have judged others, critically. Of course the person with a critical spirit cannot understand how anyone could or would judge them because after all they are living for God.

In Matthew 7:4-5, the key to remember is he is not talking about here the true judgment of evil and sin. He is speaking about those who are blatant and arrogant in their criticism of others and they don't see that as sin in their life. Folks he has a name for that person in Matthew 7:5, "Thou hypocrite".

God is interested in us cleaning up our own life. Did you notice in Matthew 7:5 it says, "Then thou shalt see clearly"? In essence the mote that is in thy brother's eye we may see differently, correctly, or not at all. This all comes back to the beam which is a critical spirit.

If you have a critical spirit in your life, you will grieve the Holy Spirit and you will hinder souls being saved and you will not have much interest in souls being saved. Of course, you will not engage anyone in a conversation to seek to lead them to Christ. This spirit also hinders the spiritual growth of others you come in contact with and it is devastating to you own family. Our children need to see us actively witness to others and they need the experience of sharing their faith as well.

Years ago a Pastor friend of mine told me about a deacon in his church. The man, his wife, and two children a son and daughter came faithfully to every service of his church for years. Their children grew up in the church. On the outward appearance everything "looked" right. Dress right; smell right, outward appearance acted right. The children went to the churches Christian school and graduated. As soon as they left the home they got involved in all kinds of sin. The daughter was involved in drugs and prostitution. The son was involved in drugs, robbery and eventually was put in jail. Dad and mom were devastated. Pastor, "where did we go wrong"? The Pastor went down to the jail to visit the son. He looked horrible and the Pastor asked the boy why did you do this thing? The son

shocked him by saying, “I don't want to talk to you, I hate you”? The Pastor said, “Why do you hate me? What have I done to you that you would hate me so much”? The answer was revealing, the son said, “Every Sunday going home from church, my sister and I listened to my dad and mom discuss how much they disagreed with you and how bad you were”? Critical spirit! These stupid parents who attended a fundamental Baptist church destroyed God's work in the lives of their children, little by little every Sunday, because of their critical spirit. They did not even realize what they were doing. I am sure there were many Sunday's when the Holy Spirit spoke to their heart to change this behavior, but in their mind this was part of their spirituality. Obviously, their lives were miserable and they made their children's lives miserable and affected their lives for all eternity. Think about the poor testimony for God and the many others that were now defiled by the “root of bitterness” in their heart.

I am convinced that many Christians live with the “root of bitterness” and critical spirit that affects many. Parents who think they are doing what they can to see their children grow up for God are actually defiling their children by their lack of Biblical understanding of what Biblical judgment is and the critical spirit of their life.

Remember, God's promise if your life is critical in nature rather than cleaning up your own life and looking to God you will be judged in the same manner in your life.

Folks, this is not a command not to judge sin in the life of another. It is a warning about having a critical spirit in your life without regard to the sin in your life. It will come back to get you.

Make sure you understand the principles, pointed out here, because you may feel you are doing everything right and it turns out all wrong. This type of sin always shows up in the lives of your children. It is epidemic in the church today and God wants us to understand He loves us and wants us to have His presence in our lives.

If God speaks to your heart about this do not just let it roll off because it will have great consequence in your life, your spouse, and children. It will affect the lives of many. If after reading this you desire true Biblical change in your life, go to our web site www.fortheloveofthefamily.com, and click on the message, “What to Do Now That I have Failed”. The message will give you a step by step procedure to correct this matter.