



"Criticism comes easier than craftsmanship."  
—Lee Iacocca

27-Jun-25

## Criticism: The Foolish Habit

[Jesus](#) teaches in the [Sermon on the Mount](#): "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For by the standard you judge you will be judged, and the measure you use will be the measure you receive" ([Matthew 7:1-2](#), New English Translation [NET]).

"Do not judge." What does it mean? Most Bible commentators agree that He is warning us about a faultfinding spirit, a negative attitude that causes us to pick at others for the things we do not like in them. One word that sums it up is *criticism*.

Criticism is a way of life for us, an integral part of our society. We have movie critics, music critics, art critics, literary critics, sports critics, dance critics, drama critics, and even wine critics. There are associations of critics and award programs for critics. As a society, we seem to be obsessed with criticizing the weaknesses and mistakes of others, living and dead, convinced that it is the right thing to do. After all, it is our way of life.

We try to remake our mates and shape up our children by criticism, and we bring that same mentality into the church. We criticize others who do not measure up to our expectations. Many find fault with church leaders for not

doing things the way we want them to be done. And we keep telling ourselves that it is the right thing to do. After all, it is our way of life.

Why did Jesus tell us not to point out the faults of others? Is He assuming that most of us have a tendency to do it? He knows our hearts, and since it is one of the most common sins among Christians, He knows that we all need this reminder to some degree. Sometimes we are not even aware we are criticizing others because we have become so used to hearing it and giving it. In fact, it can become such a common practice that we might wonder what else there is to talk about other than constantly discussing the flaws of others!

But why do we do it? One reason for criticizing others could be our own feelings of inferiority, which surface in the form of pride. Attacking someone else is flattering to ourselves; it makes us feel superior. If we can show others where they fail to measure up, we feel as if we are a little smarter or better than they are in that area.

Another reason could be envy or jealousy. We may be jealous because someone else is getting more attention than we are. Or we may envy someone's position or rank, thinking that we would be better at the job that they were given to do.

Why is criticism such a foolish habit? For one thing—and it is a big thing—criticism of this nature is sinful. It is the opposite of [love](#) because it arises out of impure motives. It attempts to emphasize one's own righteousness at the expense of someone else's reputation. On the other hand, love is reluctant to believe the worst and is hopeful of the best in others:

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ([1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#), New American Standard Version)

We criticize because of our impatience with others. Criticizing is certainly not being kind, and it is often provoked by envy and jealousy. We do it sometimes to exalt ourselves above others, which is arrogance. Criticism is

unbecoming and rude. All of this is the opposite of love. The apostle Peter tells us that love seeks to conceal unrighteousness, not expose it ([1 Peter 4:8](#)).

Another reason it is such a foolish habit is that it distorts our perspective. [Satan](#) is the originator of criticism. The first example of this is in the Garden of Eden, when Satan criticized [God](#) to Eve, which caused her perspective of God to be distorted, deceiving her into [sin](#). Then Adam's perspective of God was also distorted, and he sinned. Man has been paying for it ever since.

Numbers 12 contains an example of how God reacts to the criticism of His anointed leader. "Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against [Moses](#) because of the Cushite woman he had married" ([Numbers 12:1](#), NET). The verb of this sentence, "spoke," is in the feminine form, indicating that Miriam is the chief critic. Her criticism of her brother, Moses, causes Aaron's perspective of him to be distorted, and the result is division in the family and in the congregation. Miriam and Aaron are envious of Moses' leadership, but they use another incident—his marriage to a Gentile—to criticize him. Often the immediate criticism is simply a surface issue covering a deeper matter, which comes out in verse 2: "They said, 'Has the LORD only spoken by Moses? Has he not also spoken by us?' And the LORD heard it."

God's reaction is swift and harsh:

And the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent; he then called Aaron and Miriam, and they both came forward. The LORD said, "Hear now my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known to him in a vision; I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not like this; he is faithful in all my house. With him I will speak face to face, openly, and not in riddles; and he will see the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" The anger of the LORD burned against them, and he departed. When the cloud departed from above the tent, Miriam became leprous as snow.

So Aaron said to Moses, "O my lord, please do not hold this sin against us, in which we have acted foolishly and have sinned!" . . . Then Moses cried to the LORD, "Heal her now, O God." The LORD

said to Moses, "If her father had only spit in her face, would she not have been disgraced for seven days? Shut her out from the camp seven days, and afterward she can be brought back in again." So Miriam was shut outside of the camp for seven days, and the people did not journey on until Miriam was brought back in. ([Numbers 12:5-11](#), 13-15, NET)

Miriam's criticism not only led her and Aaron to sin, but it also affected the entire camp, delaying the journey to the Promised Land. This should make us wonder: Does criticism within the church stunt our growth toward the [Kingdom of God](#)? It surely does, pitting brother against brother, producing division and [offense](#), and perhaps causing a vulnerable brother to [fall away](#).

Instead of criticizing others, we need to engage in some honest *self*-criticism. We have plenty of faults of our own; there is no need to go looking for them in others. So, whenever we are tempted to pick at a fault in someone else, we need to pray as David does in [Psalm 139:23-24](#) (KJV): "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

- Clyde Finklea

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## New Transcripts

### [599s: 'It Is Written'](#)

Given by Clyde Finklea on 01-Mar-03

### [620s: The Right Goal](#)

Given by Bill Onisick on 05-Jul-03

### [626s: Be Kindly Affectionate](#)

Given by Martin G. Collins on 16-Aug-03

### [BS-TC04: The Commandments \(Part Four\)](#)

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 06-Aug-88

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Numbers: The Book of Judgment](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The difference between a pilgrim and a wanderer is that the pilgrim knows his destination. God wants our pilgrimage to be a direct route with very few side-trips to the world. The book of Numbers—a record of God's judgments, tests, and evaluations for ancient Israel, preparing them for their inheritance of the Promised Land—should provide us a roadmap for our pilgrimage to the spiritual Kingdom of God. Like our forebears, we live daily in uncharted territory, but the sobering account in Numbers provides a roadmap, establishing God's pattern of judging and evaluating our pilgrimage conduct.

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## From the Archives: Featured Article

### [Judging Our Brothers](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The subject of judging is a sensitive one in this age. Is it proper for Christians to judge matters? What does the Bible say on the matter?

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## Featured Audio Schedule

### **Friday Night Bible Study**

The next Bible Study (Friday 27-Jun-25) will be **Acts (Part Fifteen)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh**. The Bible Study will be featured on the [CGG homepage](#) from **6:00 pm Friday (EST)** and all day Saturday.

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