

EXTRA! Ideas for Adults – Avoiding a Critical Spirit – Special Focus Session

Date: May 28, 2023

Session Title: Avoiding a Critical Spirit

The Point: Guard your heart against criticizing others.

Get Into the Study

Use the following information to introduce Question #1.

Westminster Abbey hosted over two-thousand spectators as King Charles III was anointed King of the British Commonwealth, earlier this month. With senior royals wearing historic ermine robes and jewels, and tens of thousands of citizens in the streets, bishops led a tradition-rich ceremony, and the church bells of Britain sounded in unison. None of these celebratory details reflect a less-cheery truth seen in recent polls: the country's support for the monarchy has never been so low.

While 70 years ago, nearly every British family hunkered around newly-purchased televisions to watch his mother's coronation, the royal "firm" led by King Charles enjoys far less support. "Only three in 10 Britons think the monarchy is 'very important,' says the Guardian. Younger generations may hold the key to the future of the monarchy. In 2015, over 60 percent of British young adults felt that the monarchy was "good for Britain," but that number has declined in the last year to just 32 percent. With younger royals Prince William and Princess Kate cited as the most popular royals, the system is unlikely to collapse in the near future, but the family must step carefully as they live under continual scrutiny.

Say: Divorces and personal scandals among the royals often bring short-term criticism, but weddings, deaths, celebrations, and examples of service often win back the hearts and long-term support of the British people. People's opinions, even on big things, can change over time.

Ask question #1 : "When have you been critical of something but later changed your mind?"

Information for this post was gleaned from:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/apr/28/public-support-monarchy-historic-low-poll-reveals>
- <https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/05/europe/royals-coronation-polling-britons-intl/index.html>
- <https://www.newsweek.com/polling-trend-bring-down-king-charles-monarchy-millennials-polling-1770893>
- <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12024235/Kate-William-popular-royals-poll-shows.html>

Study the Bible

Use the following information to introduce Question #5.

With more than 300 vacancies, and not enough applicants to fill them, residents of Austin, Texas have been faced with a big question this spring: what do we do about our policing? Surging retirements and nation-wide staffing shortages in law enforcement are affecting many such cities. For Austin this means that, according to the New York Post, “at times, entire areas of the city are left unpatrolled while the few officers who are working respond to a large incident.”

To resolve the issue in the short-term, in March, city officials contracted with Texas State Police. Though crime dropped as a result, Austin officials received complaints and concerns about the newer modes of policing. Austin Police Chief Joseph Chacon expressed his intent to be responsive to community input, and make departmental strategies match the goals of the community, with less “hot-spot policing,” and greater geographical coverage.

During the recent election held in early May, voters opted to retain community oversight over Austin’s policing. But with city officials balking, and police unions stepping away from the bargaining table, Mayor Kirk Watson anticipates a “tough road ahead” as the city seeks long-term solutions.

Say: “Community issues can bring out wide variance in opinions, and similar things happen in our churches and families. While we should speak the truth in love with our neighbors, tense topics can bring out the worst and encourage us toward having a critical attitude.

Then ask Question #5: “What role does our group play in keeping one another from having a critical spirit?”

Information for this post was gleaned from:

Additional Questions

Icebreaker

- When have you felt unfairly criticized?
- How do you typically respond to criticism?
- When have you said, “Wow, that was harsh!”?
- When have you been unfairly criticized?
- When have you been critical of something but later changed your tune?

Numbers 12:1-3

- What’s so bad about comparing ourselves to others?
- Why does this criticism make things worse rather than better?
- How can you tell if your concern is truly right vs. wrong, rather than a matter of familiarity or of opinion?
- What practices can guard our hearts against a critical spirit?
- How might criticism get in the way of doing ministry?

- What kinds of things often fuel our criticism of others?
- What do we lose when we compare ourselves to others? What negative things do we gain?
- Why is a critical spirit so harmful for everyone involved?

Numbers 12:4-9

- What kinds of situations can tempt us to criticize others?
- How does our reaction to others' criticism reveal our attitude toward God?
- How can criticism of God's leaders impact our communion with God?
- What do these verses reveal about God's character?
- When does "questioning" cross the line into "criticism"?
- What kind of personal evaluation needs to occur before we speak any words of criticism?
- What can we do instead of speaking words of criticism against others we disagree with?

Numbers 12:10-15

- What do you find encouraging about the Lord's counsel to Moses regarding Miriam?
- What are active steps we can take to avoid a critical spirit in our lives?
- How can we see God's grace even in this punishment?
- What practical steps can a believer take to guard their heart from criticizing others?

For Those in Your Group

Send the following link to your group members as either a teaser before the group meets or as a follow-up thought:

[When a Critical Spirit Masquerades as Humor](#)

Magazine Article

This article complements the study. Share this link with your group members.

- HomeLife – [Let Go of Resentment](#)