

***Question: What would Jesus say about folks who like to criticize and put others down for mistakes they make?***

It is always easier to see the faults in others than recognize them in ourselves. As someone has said, a little sin is one I commit. If you do the same thing, it is a big sin. Often, when people are unhappy with themselves, they seem to become more critical of others. However, I am reminded of what Jesus said to those who brought to him a woman caught in the very act of sin, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7). Upon hearing this, they all walked away and left Jesus alone with the woman.

Only Jesus, the one who never made a mistake, is in the position to criticize the mistakes of others; but he made it clear that he did not come into this world to judge or criticize. He came that the world might be saved through him (John 3:17). To the self-righteous critics of our world, Jesus said, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” (Matthew 7:1-3; cf. Jude 1:14-16).

Obviously, it is far easier to tear down than to build up. Also, it is easier to point out the mistakes of others than to take the time and effort to show them how to improve. We may think that pointing out the mistakes of others will keep the spotlight from shining on our own mistakes, but the same critical spirit we show toward others usually comes back on ourselves. However, if we will commit to joining with others in an effort to help each other improve our lives and work, we will usually find an unsurpassed joy in life and high esteem in the eyes of people around us.

In contrast to the critics of this world, Jesus found his greatest joy in serving (Mark 10:45), in healing the sick and hurting of our world, and in giving grace to those who have sinned. The apostle Paul admonished, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” He then pointed out the

example of Jesus who “being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.” As a result, he added, “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name” (Philippians 2:3-9).

If you have been maligned and abused by those with hateful hearts who spoke unkind words, remember that our Lord Jesus had to endure harsh words and unfair treatment. So, he understands and will help you if you will trust in him and follow his ways. Let him fill your heart with the love that covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8); and, come what may, don't let go of that love! Although you may encounter people whose unkindness may hurt you. don't let them make you bitter in your heart. We win by tenderness; we conquer by forgiving love.

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