

# Handling Criticism & Opposition

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Bearing in mind Satan's total opposition to the purpose of God, let's not think that the present season of refreshing will be without conflict.

People's reactions will vary from direct confrontation to evasive techniques. Between these two extremes some will report adversely on meetings without knowing what actually took place. Others will seek to manipulate the weak or intimidate those genuinely seeking. At the same time there will possibly be strong power plays within denominations intended to intimidate pastors. The most difficult time is when the opposition deteriorates into personal attacks upon your integrity or motives, suggesting that you are acting for personal gain. These things can deeply hurt you, and, what is even more difficult, bring distress to your family. You feel helpless. You cannot prove them wrong since you cannot show them motive or integrity. These are difficult to handle. Yet handle them we must if we are to continue to enjoy the blessing of God.

The following are some pointers that I have found helpful in handling conflict and opposition.

## 1. Beware of Becoming Over Defensive.

This will cause you to block your ears to any criticism and could mean you will reject an adjustment God is seeking to make in you. Examine all criticism in the light of the Word, asking yourself these hard questions: Is it biblical? Can we justify acceptance of all that is going on in the name of the Spirit? Is there a need to have a firmer hold on what is going on in the meeting?

## 2. Be Honest If You Are Wrong.

We must maintain our integrity by repenting before God, asking forgiveness of any who have been hurt, and adjusting where necessary, so that we may continue to enjoy the refreshing of His presence without condemnation or guilt. At the same time be careful not to overreact to criticism and end up throwing away the baby with the bath water.

“Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”<sup>1</sup>

## 3. Recognize Why Some People Oppose.

**SOME OPPOSE THROUGH IGNORANCE.** We need to be patient and understanding with such people as we seek to share the word, undergirding the work of the Spirit.

**SOME OPPOSE THROUGH FEAR.** They fear something not experienced before. We need to allay their fears by the Word. How often Jesus had to say 'fear not' to those who were the closest to Him.

**SOME OPPOSE BECAUSE THEY ARE DECEIVED.** They are often trapped by theology, bureaucracy or tradition. They believe that whatever is inexplicable is to be condemned. We pray that God will open 'the eyes of their understanding', so that they can break out of the barren ghettos of the soul and spring to life and enjoy the refreshing of the Spirit.

**SOME OPPOSE THROUGH JEALOUSY, PRIDE OR DEMONIC POWER.** We must stand in the truth, strengthen ourselves in the Word and prayer, and humbly, yet triumphantly, rule the situation by refusing to capitulate or compromise our position.

#### 4. Do Not Indulge in 'Pity Partying'...

...thinking to ourselves that we are the most persecuted people on God's earth. 'Pity partying' robs us of the blessing that comes with being privileged to suffer.

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed."<sup>2</sup>

#### 5. Do Not Harbor Their Remarks.

This will depress you and give rise to bitterness. Why allow your mind to be the garbage can for other people's dirt and bad attitudes? We must guard our mind and feed it with good things to see it renewed, for by it we are transformed.

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things."<sup>3</sup>

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will."<sup>4</sup>

#### 6. Love Your Enemies.

...and recognize that what they are doing, whether consciously or unconsciously, is providing you with opportunities to grow in grace.

"These have come so that your faith may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus is revealed."<sup>5</sup>

#### 7. Continue in the Blessing You Are Receiving.

In this way everything good will increase in you. God is delighted to add blessing on blessing - you cannot receive too much, nor exhaust the supply of God.

"Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup>

#### 8. Do Good to Anyone that is Doing Wrong to You.

Never come down to their level by retaliation, giving criticism for criticism, attack for attack. Neither is there virtue or value in gritting your teeth and swallowing hard! That merely suppresses anger which will eventually explode in bitter or resentful vitriolic. Let's be positive in overcoming their wrong with something good that we do for or towards them.

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."<sup>7</sup>

"Make sure that no one pays back wrong for wrong, but always seek that which is good for one another."<sup>8</sup> ✓

1. I Thes. 5:21, 22
2. I Peter 4:12, 13
3. Phil. 4:8
4. Romans 12:2
5. I Peter 1:7
6. Ephesians 5:15 - 20
7. Romans 12:21
8. I Thes. 5:15

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