

ALPHA COUNSELING SERVICES

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Celebrating Forty Years of Service

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Dear Friends,

As I read the news, watch political commentators, and listen to ordinary conversations by friends and strangers I am fascinated with how we really enjoy CRITICISM! Generally criticism is defined as the expression of disapproval of someone or something...

Jesus taught in Matthew 7:1 ESV *"Judge not, that you be not judged"*. Some have taken this to mean you can never say anything is right or wrong but, the Amplified Bible helps with some extra understanding. *"Do not judge and criticize and condemn (others unfairly with an attitude of self-righteous superiority as though assuming the office of a judge), so that you will not be judged (unfairly)."*

Chambers mentions in MY Utmost for His Highest "The average Christian is the most piercingly critical individual known. Criticism is one of the ordinary activities of some people, but in the spiritual realm nothing is accomplished by it. The effect of criticism is the dividing up of the strengths of the one being criticized." I'm not sure all Christians are the worst at criticism but, there are those who make a ministry of finding fault with most everything.

In the next verses in Matthew 7 Jesus uses the illustration of the twig and the plank in people's eyes as a comparison of how we ought to be focused on our own issues and not on others so much. After thirty years of counseling I've come to the conclusion that there is really only one person I can actually change-- ME! Now if I am walking with the Lord and working on my attitudes, opinions, and especially my words and the tone of my words I may influence others to a better place but that is about all the power I have over others.

Chambers continues "It is impossible to enter into fellowship with God when you are in a critical mood. Criticism serves to make **us** harsh, vindictive, and cruel and leave **us** with the soothing idea that **we** are somehow superior to others." I changed several words in this quote I replaced the word you with us and we because I wanted to include myself. In a different context Jesus said to His disciples *"The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak"* and we all struggle with this when tempted to find fault in others.

Now in my 29th year at Alpha I hopefully have learned that there are always details that I didn't know about a situation. So often I get only one side of a story and wish I knew more of what happened to better help. Every person and situation has details we know nothing about and if we did understand more maybe we wouldn't be so critical. I have found it is best to ask questions to find out the rest of the story before offering my opinion. Of all the people on Earth we Christians should obey Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind and helpful to one another, tender-hearted (compassionate, understanding), just as God in Christ also forgave you." Amplified Bible

Summer has arrived early at Alpha and counseling slows down but please continue praying for Debi and I as we minister to the hurting..

*Thank you for your prayers and financial help.
May you have a blessed summer!*

Richard