

What is Criticism?

Have you ever heard of a word called 'criticism'? Have you ever been accused of being 'critical'? Do you like it? How do you feel? Really, you should never criticize, it's a sin—did you know that?

I'll never forget the first time I was accused of being critical by the 'Brethren', it really upset me. That year at campmeeting at Auburn, Washington, the Conference President got a panel. He had a teacher, he had a minister and he had a doctor, on this panel and they were to discuss criticism from the professional viewpoints of each one. It was very interesting. And then the congregation was allowed to make comments and discuss it. Then they sent the panel out to deliberate and bring in a verdict.

The consensus of the group was that are two kinds of criticism; destructive and constructive. The panel reported that they had considered the matter, and this was several hours later, if I remember correctly, they'd had a very difficult time defining destructive and constructive criticism. The best consensus that the panel could come up with is, that if you're criticizing me—that's destructive; and if I'm criticizing you, I'm constructive.

Didn't make anybody very happy, but you know, it's a real slippery issue, this issue of criticism and it usually silences the people—to be accused of criticism. It bothered me for years, and I'd go home and I'd be all upset and wonder if I had committed some terrible sin.

So finally, I decided that I would have to settle the issue for myself; so I went through the Spirit of Prophecy and I went through the Bible to find out just what is permissible and what is not permissible; what is sin and what is not sin. Because Sister White says, that the Devil wants to silence the voice of reproof and rebuke in the church, and he does it by labeling everything criticism.

I found that Sister White says that I am not to criticize the minister or my fellow church members in their facial expressions; their use of the English Language, if they happen to not speak correct English you know, grammar; and not to criticize his dress. I am not to criticize anything about the person. To find fault with one of God's created beings—he can't help the way he looks, and he can't help these things—to find fault or to criticize a human being is wrong.

Then I found something else; there is something else that I absolutely cannot criticize; and I am not to criticize the Truth, or to find fault with the Truth, a 'thus sayeth the Lord'. And then I found something that it is IMPOSSIBLE to criticize—now what could that be? You cannot criticize error and wrong-doing. To speak against these two things is to rebuke, reprove, and warn and exhort. **It is NOT criticizing!**

The only things you can criticize are the individual and his mannerisms, his personality and this type of thing, and the Truth. To speak against error, falsehood, unjust dealing, deceitfulness—is to rebuke and to reprove—it is NOT criticism according to the Spirit of Prophecy. In fact, when I was ordained to the ministry, they read me the charge, and the charge said rebuke, reprove and warn.

Now I can't reprove righteousness—I can only criticize it, if I find fault with it. I cannot rebuke Truth—I can only find fault and criticize the Truth. I may think I am, but Sister White divides it right there. To find fault with the person and the things about the person is forbidden, it is sin, and God does not approve or tolerate it. And to find fault with the Truth, with honesty, uprightness, is criticism and fault-finding and back-biting. But to speak out against dishonesty, and deceitfulness, and deception and fraud, and falsehood, and error—is rebuking and reprove and exhorting.

Now we should remember the difference—the people do not in general know the difference. I didn't know it for years, until I got to the point where I just couldn't live any more with the constant charge of being critical, the minute I spoke out against something.

What is Criticism?

Now when I speak out against losing money on the stock market, I am not criticizing, I am reproving.

Is Public Reproof Needed?

Does anyone suppose that the messages of warning will not come to those whom God reproves? The ones reprov'd may rise up in indignation and seek to bring the law to bear upon God's messenger, but in doing this, they are not bringing the law upon the messenger, but upon Christ, who gave the reproof and the warning. When men endanger the work and cause of God by their own wrong course of action, shall they hear no voice of reproof? If the wrongdoer only were concerned, and the work reached no farther than him, he alone should have the words of warning; but when his course of action is doing positive harm to the cause of truth, and souls are imperiled, **God requires that the warning be as broad as the injury done.** The testimonies will not be hindered. The words of rebuke and warning, the plain "Thus saith the Lord," will come from God's appointed agencies; for the words do not originate with the human instrument; they are from God, who appointed them their work. If a suit is instituted in earthly tribunals, and God suffers it to come to trial, it is that His own name may be glorified. But a woe will be upon the man who gives himself to do this work. God reads the motives, whatever they may be. I pray that the Lord will teach our brethren to be straightforward, and make no compromise in the matter. The cause of God has been bruised and wounded by any such men connecting with it, and the sooner they are separated from it, the better. . . .
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