

What Criticising People Tells You about Yourself

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 September 2024

Preacher: Nick Louw

[0 : 0 0] To begin, how many times per day are you critical of someone else? Think about it. If you had to count the amount of times that you say something or think something critical about another person, how many would it be?

And when would it start in your day? It wouldn't be long, let's be honest, before the first time that we said or thought something critical about someone else.

Maybe still at home as you're getting ready for work. Maybe something about your spouse or your sibling. And if not at home, then probably in your morning commute.

Am I right? I mean, there's people who give us ample opportunity to be critical on the roads. My morning commute is literally four minutes. And in that four minutes from my home to the church, there's more than enough opportunity to be critical of other drivers on the road.

And maybe if it's not your morning commute, it'll be at work when you're at the coffee machine or the water cooler and people are talking about other people. And of course, the conversation turns to someone and what they're doing wrong.

[1 : 1 2] You see, being critical of others does seem to be standard operating procedure, doesn't it? In our lives. Everybody's critical. There's lots of people.

You go on the internet, you look at YouTube, you talk to people, and people are critical of people. All the time. And it just seems to be what you do. And you ingratiate yourself to others by being critical of people.

That's standard operating procedure in this world. And I mean, let's be honest, people are often irritating. And people do give us more than enough reasons to be critical of them, don't they?

In a standard day. And so it's something we often do without even realizing it. But did you know that your criticism of others actually tells you a lot about your relationship with God?

As we come to this passage in Matthew 7, that's what Jesus is talking about. Your criticism of others. And His point in this passage, as we look at it.

[2 : 2 0] So look at this passage in your Bibles. I want you to have it open in front of you. Matthew 7, verse 1 to 12. And the point that Jesus is making in this passage is that there's a connection between how you approach people in your life, which is the first section from verse 1 to 6, and how you approach God, which is the second section from verse 7 to 12.

And so let's see what that connection is. That's what I want us to discover this morning. And let's discover what criticizing others shows you about yourself.

And so from verse 1, Jesus says, Do not judge so that you won't be judged. That's how He starts. And immediately we see there that there's a relationship between us judging others and God judging us.

You see that? But first, before we go into what He says here, we need to clarify something. What does He mean by judging others here? And what does He not mean?

When He says, Do not judge so that you won't be judged. Do not judge. What does He mean by that? Well, He's not saying that we're not to call wrong things wrong in the world.

[3 : 44] Right? That we're not to call homosexuality wrong or abortion wrong. Those things are contrary to God's will.

And the Bible is quite clear on that. And so when He says, Don't judge. He's not saying, Don't call wrong things wrong. And often that's how this verse is misused. You may have heard that before. You know, When Christians are calling out things that are wrong in society.

Or were they warning people of wrong, destructive patterns of behavior. People often respond by, Well, don't judge me. Doesn't your Bible say, Do not judge?

Hmm? How can you judge me? So you'll often get that. But you see, Elsewhere, If you look at what else Jesus said, Even in Matthew, Elsewhere, He does tell us That we've got to warn other people of destructive behavior.

He does tell us That we've got to criticize false teaching when we come across it. And He does tell us That we've got to hold each other in the church accountable for our sins. And so that's not what He means When He says here, Do not judge.

[4 : 52] What He means Is sitting in judgment Or condemning someone else When you are actually no better than them At this particular thing you're condemning.

Because look at how He goes on. Verse 2 For you will be judged by the same standard with which you judge others. And you will be measured by the same measure you use.

Okay, so when you want to criticize someone, Jesus wants you to first ask yourself, Well, if the same standard that I'm using for them, In what I'm saying about them, If that same standard is used for me, Would I be innocent?

That's the habit He wants us to start getting into. Because so often, am I right, We have double standards. We criticize someone for something, And yet we don't see that same thing in ourselves.

It kind of reminds me of when we watch rugby. And let's say it's a New Zealand vs. South Africa game. And there's a ruck and there's the breakdown.

[6 : 04] And then we spot the New Zealand players not rolling away. But the ref doesn't see it. We're up in arms, aren't we? Ref! Ref! What a blind ref! He can't see it! Ref! And we stand up and we complain. But of course when our players do that, Oh, we don't notice it.

We just... We don't say anything about it. You see that's double standards. When we're watching a sports game. But we have the same concept, The same double standards when we criticize others.

Jesus is saying here. When we criticize others, We're very quick to point out what they're doing wrong, Or what's wrong with them. But when it comes to ourselves, We conveniently don't see that in ourselves.

And so Jesus goes on from verse 3. He says, Why do you look at the splinter in your brother's eye, But don't notice the beam of wood in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, Let me take the splinter out of your eye, And look, there's a beam of wood in your own eye.

Hypocrite! First take the beam of wood out of your eye, And then you will see clearly, To take the splinter out of your brother's eye. Notice there, by the way, In that last verse, Take the playing out so you can see clearly, He's not saying here that we never are to point out wrong.

[7 : 24] We've just got to do it when we're seeing clearly. But more importantly, The burden of what he's saying is that We've got to look at ourself first. Before we criticize someone else, We've got to look at ourself first, Because we might be worse.

But, When we get into this habit, Of constantly criticizing others, When it's part of our life, To just be critical of others, What it points out, What it indicates, What Jesus is saying here, Is that we are blind to our own faults.

If we had 20-20 vision of our own faults, We would be much more hesitant to criticize others. But the fact that we do, So frequently, Shows that we are blind to our own faults.

Verse 3, At the end of it, You do not notice the beam of wood in your own eye. That's what Jesus is saying here. You don't see your own faults. It's much harder to see your own faults, Than the faults of others.

And you know what Jesus calls you when you do that? Verse 5, Hypocrite. Hypocrite. We've come across that word before, Haven't we? In the Sermon on the Mount.

[8 : 40] Jesus uses it, More than anyone else in the Bible. Hypocrite. It means, Literally in the original context, It means an actor. Someone who pretended, To be someone they were not.

And Jesus is saying here, When you, When you criticize others, When that's, A habit in your life, You are pretending, You are pretending, To be someone you're not.

In this case, You're pretending to be better than you are. It's a symptom of self-righteousness, To be critical of others. So that's what he's saying here, In these, First few verses in our passage.

But, You know, I was looking at this passage, During the week, Preparing to preach on it, And I, I thought to myself, What is it actually doing here, In this part of the Sermon on the Mount?

So what we need to do, Actually for a second, Is zoom out, And look at where we are, In the Sermon on the Mount, And what Jesus is talking about, In the passage before and after. Because when you look at that, It, This seems really out of place, This passage.

[9 : 43] So have, Have a look. Because, This passage here, 7, 1 to 6, All about, Being critical of others, Is in the middle of passages, That are all about trusting God.

Do you notice that? So, The passage before, We looked at last week, About trusting God, For the things we need, And not being anxious about it. And then the next passage, From verse 7 onwards, It's about approaching God, And asking and trusting, That he will give us good things.

And so what is this passage, About criticizing others, Doing in the middle of a section, About trusting God? It's a good question to ask. Because it forces us to think about, How those two things are related.

And you see, We've been discovering, As we've been journeying, Through the Sermon on the Mount, That this teaching of Jesus, Is actually all about, Our relationship with God. And what life looks like, In right relationship with God, In the center of the Sermon on the Mount, The structural center, Is the Lord's Prayer, Which is, Which starts with our Father.

It's a central, Teaching on our relationship with God, And how to engage, In healthy daily relationship, With our Creator. But notice, So that's, The Lord's Prayer is back in, Sort of halfway through chapter 6.

[11 : 04] But notice, As you look at your Bibles, What Jesus goes on to do, After the Lord's Prayer. So after the Lord's Prayer, He's been showing, What it's like, When that relationship with God, Is not healthy.

And so, 6 verse 19, Materialism. Don't store up for yourself, Treasures on earth. But store up for yourself, Treasures in heaven. When you're storing, When you're chasing, Treasures on earth, And not treasures in heaven, It shows you that there's something wrong, With your relationship with God.

Same as, 6 verse 25, Worrying. When you worry all the time, About things, It shows you that there's something wrong, With your relationship with God. We saw that last week. Well, you see, Jesus is saying the same, About criticizing others, In your life.

When you are in the habit, Of criticizing others, It's an indicator, That there is something wrong, In your relationship with God. Now why is that? Why does criticizing others, Point out something wrong, In your relationship with God?

Well, because, A right relationship with God, Requires that you are real, About yourself. That you are genuine, And real about yourself, Not acting better than you are.

[12 : 24] But when you're, Constantly criticizing others, That's exactly what you're doing. You're acting better than you are. You think you are better, Than the person you're criticizing, And you think you're better, Than you actually are.

And as long as you're doing that, As long as that's your view on yourself, You can never approach God properly. And yet so many do. So many people.

In fact, The standard, Religious, Assumption, Is to approach God, Because I'm a good person. That's how I can approach Him. So many people, In religions, All over the world, In various cultures, Pretend to be good people, In order to, Think that they can approach God.

And what they do, When they pretend to be good people, Is of course, They look down on, The people who aren't as good as them. It's kind of this, The standard caricature, Of a religious person, Right?

You ask the world, What is a religious person like? Well they'll say, Well it's someone who, Who walks around, Who, Who's all holy, And lives a good life, And they judge, And they look down, On sinners around them.

[13 : 36] And yet so easily, A Christian can do that. In our attitude to those around us, Oh thank you Lord, I'm not like that person. Just like the, The Pharisee, That Jesus spoke about. Thank you that I'm not like the tax collector.

I'm so much better than that. That is, That is what the world, Thinks a religious person is like. Because, Nine times out of ten, It's true. But you know what that is?

When, When, When you are, When a person is, Walking around, Pretending to be a good person, And looking down, On those who are not as good as them.

You know what that is? That's a fundamental failure, To believe the gospel. It's nothing less than that. As all of these things actually are.

Materialism, Chasing churches on earth, Worrying, And, Criticizing others. They are fundamental failures, To believe the gospel. That's what Jesus is talking about here.

[14 : 42] Because, What is the gospel? What is the gospel message? What is the news of the gospel? It's that you are a fallen sinner. And, You are beyond, Any hope of saving yourself, And getting right with God.

That ship has sailed. Right? You cannot fix this relationship. You've already sinned, In multiple ways. You are beyond hope of saving yourself.

But, God loves you, And sent Jesus to die, To die, To save you. Because that was the only way, You could be saved.

Not by anything you could do, But by the son of God, Becoming flesh, And dying for you. That's the only way, That you could be saved. And that's what he did, To bring you back, Into a relationship with God, By grace alone, Despite the fact that, You are completely unworthy of that.

That is the gospel. Amen. Thank you. And that is the most important news, A human being could ever hear.

[15 : 44] But they will never, A person will never embrace, That gospel news, If they still think, That they are good.

If they think, That they are good. That is the most, Impenetrable barrier, To them really believing the gospel.

You can't. You cannot believe, In the saving gospel, And be saved, If you think, You are still a good person. It's impossible. And that's perhaps, What Jesus meant, By the next verse.

Verse 6, Don't give what is holy, To dogs, Or toss your pills, Before pigs, Or they will trample them, Under their feet, Turn and tear you, To pieces. He's talking here, About a common phrase, Of not giving something, To someone they won't appreciate.

We often use, You know, Pills to pigs. But I think, What Jesus is talking about here, Is the gospel itself. And he's saying, The gospel, Is not going to be, Embraced by all people.

[16 : 51] Particularly, By those who think, They're good. That's the one, Major thing, That's going to stop people, From embracing, And believing, The gospel. If you think, You are good, You can never, Appreciate, The gospel of grace.

And if you, Constantly criticize others, That's exactly, What you think about yourself. So you see, Why Jesus is talking about that here? That's, Your criticism of others, Is actually, So important, Because it shows you, What you believe about yourself, And about God, And about the gospel.

And so consider, How you view others. Consider how you talk about others. And consider, What that reveals about you, And whether you really believe, The gospel of undeserved grace, And that you are a sinner, No better than them.

Because only then, Will you be able, To approach God, Properly. Through grace alone. And that is the very next thing, That Jesus now talks about, From verse 7.

Have a look at what he says. Ask, And it will be given to you, Seek, And you will find. Knock, And the door will be opened to you, For everyone who asks, Receives.

[18 : 06] And the one who seeks, Finds. And to the one who knocks, The door will be opened. So just pause there. You see the huge promises, Jesus is making here?

Amazing promises. For everyone who asks, Receives. It seems so, So extreme.

Everyone who asks, Receives. Irrespective of whether, They deserve it or not. That's what he's saying here. Irrespective of whether, Someone's earned, God's favor or not.

If they ask, They'll receive. No matter who they are. If they're God's people. Of course he's talking about, The covenant community here. He's talking about the grace, That God gives to his people, In covenant relationship with him.

And he's saying, Whoever they are, Whether they've earned it or not, No matter what they've done, Irrespective of that, If they ask, They will receive. If they knock, The door will be opened. Now that, That idea, Of completely, Unmerited asking, That doesn't sit right with us.

[19 : 16] Now we know, It's part of the gospel message, And yet it doesn't sit, Right with us. It rubs up against, How we normally think about things. Especially in a world, Where everything is earned. Where we're trained from, From day one, That we've got to earn, What we have.

Nothing is free. If you want a job one day, Well you have to go to, University, You have to, You know, Pass your exams at school. You've got to earn it. And it's right, By the way, I'm not saying it's wrong.

You want a job, You better study, And get a job. You've got to earn it. Things don't just fall into your lap, Right? If you want, If you want house, A house one day, You want to buy a house, Or you want, You know, Your daily food, You want to make sure, That you've got what you need, You've got to work for it.

You can't just sit, And expect it to come to you. If you want a partner one day, Well you've got to win them. You've got to work, You've got to look good, You've got to, You know, You know what all the people do to, You don't just sit and expect, Someone's going to knock on your door, And, And want to marry you.

You see, We're programmed, Because we live in a world, Where that is a reality. We're programmed, That we've got to work for what we have. But the thing is, We automatically then, Take that, Subconscious, Assumption, And we think about approaching God, The same way.

[20 : 40] We can't help it. No matter how much, We know theologically, About the doctrines of grace, The instinct, That we have, Is, To think we've got to earn, Our approach to God.

And that's why Jesus has to, Reiterate here, This gospel of grace. What grace really means. Because we think, By nature, Subconsciously, We think that, To access God, To receive, From God, We've got to be good Christians.

We've got to have, Pleased him. We've got to be living the right way, If, We're going to approach God, And ask for things. Now we wouldn't say that, But I think we feel it.

I think, We do not feel right, To ask God for something, If, If we, If we're caught in a sin, Or, We haven't pleased him in some way. But you know that, That attitude, That hesitancy, To approach God, Because of, Our sin, That shame, That keeps us from approaching him, Until we fix it, And, And please him, And then we can feel, Free to approach him.

That hesitancy, To approach God, Is actually just another version, Of self-righteousness, Because, It's an assumption, That our approach to God, Is based on how good we are, And I think, No matter how long, We've been Christians, There's still an element of that, In our approach to God, But do you see the problem, With that way of thinking?

[22 : 22] Because if, Your approach to God, Is based on, How good you've been that week, How much you've been, Overcoming your sin, How much you've been, Pleasing God, If, Your approach to God, Is based on that, You'll never be able, To approach him confidently, Your relationship with God, Will always be up and down, Because it'll always depend, On how well you've done that week, And yet what Jesus is saying here, Is the complete opposite of that, What Jesus is saying here, Is any of God's people, At any time, Irrespective of how well they've done, Can still approach him boldly, Without any hesitation, And the reason, Jesus says, Is because God is a father, To his people, And a good father, Doesn't turn away, His children, No matter how undeserving, They are, Verse 11, If you then,

Who are evil, Know how to give good gifts, To your children, How much more, Will your father in heaven, Give good gifts, Good things, To those, Who ask him, I mean, Imagine, Imagine, If you're a parent, Right, Imagine that you only gave food, To your children, When they'd earned it, You know, They only got supper, If they'd done all their chores, Properly, I mean, You'd have some emaciated children, Walking around, Right, A good parent, Doesn't do that, Okay, A good parent, Loves their children, And wants to give their children, What they need, Every day, No matter, No matter, What they've done, To earn it, That's what a good parent does, And that's, A good sinful parent, Jesus' pointer, Is how much more, God, Because that is the relationship, Jesus came to bring you, You into, That's what he came to, That's what he came to this earth,

And died, So that you could, Come into that relationship, With God as a father, A good father, The best father, Who, Who wants to give his children, Good things, Irrespective of whether, They've, They've earned it, That's why Jesus had to die, So that you could have, That relationship, With God, As your father, To know God, As a father, Who delights to give, What you haven't earned, And to hear you, When you don't deserve it, That's what God wants to do, That's in his heart, He's, He's a father, That's always been his heart, He wants to give you, What you don't deserve, He wants to hear you, When you've, You've earned it the least, And that's why Jesus came, And died, So that, He could take on the cross, All of those sins, That separate you from God, All of those sins, That mess up that relationship, He took on himself, He absorbed into himself,

So that they don't get in the way, Of you and God, So that no matter what you do, Or don't do, You can still come to him, As a child, To a father who loves you, Hebrews, Chapter 10, Says this, In reflection of the gospel, Hebrews 10, Verse 19, Therefore brothers and sisters, Since we have boldness, To enter the sanctuary, Through the blood of Jesus, Verse 22, Let us draw near, With a true heart, In full assurance of faith, With our hearts, Sprinkled clean, From an evil conscience, And our bodies washed in pure water, You know, And that's what the sacraments, That Jesus established, Are there to convince us of, Our bodies washed in pure water, You know, The sign, The sacrament of baptism, As we've come into, The covenant community, And sprinkled clean, By Jesus' blood, Which we remember, Every time we, We share the Lord's Supper,

That's God wanting to, Because he knows, How easily, You slip back, Into self-righteousness, God wants to, Regularly, Remind you, With these visual signs, That your sins are gone, You can come to him, It doesn't matter, What you've done, Because your heart, Is sprinkled clean, From an evil conscience, And our bodies are washed, With pure water, We need to get this, About Christianity, If we get nothing else, We need to get this, About Christianity, It's not based on, Anything you do, But everything, Jesus has done, And because of that, Because of what Jesus, Has done on the cross, No matter how much, You messed up this week, Your heavenly father, Is no less willing, To embrace you, And to forgive you, And to help you, If you are in Christ, And so don't allow, Your sin to chase you, Away from God, If you're a Christian, But it so often does,

[27 : 29] You know, So often we feel, Shameful about our sin, And we stop praying, And especially, If it's a subconscious sin, Maybe one that we're nurturing, And we don't want to, Actually get rid of, It pushes us away from God, Our sin so often, Pushes us away from God, But don't allow it to do that, Don't allow your sin, To chase you away from God, Out of shame, Your sin should chase you, Towards God, If you know, That he's a loving father, He's ready to forgive you, And that is completely, The opposite of all, Other religions, In the world, In all other religions, You've got to earn your way to God, By putting off your sin, And purifying yourself, In Christianity, Your sin, Is the thing that qualifies you, To come to God, It's the thing that should push you, To God, And his grace, And his mercy, It's completely opposite, To all other religions, But it is absolutely essential, For a healthy relationship, With God, And when you get that, When you truly, Grasp, God's unmerited,

Ever constant, Grace, And willingness, To receive you with open arms, No matter what you've done, No matter how much your faith has failed, No matter how much your faith is lagging, Or no matter, How much you've caught in a sin, He's always ready to, To welcome his covenant people, For whom Jesus died, When you get that, It fundamentally changes, How you look at other people now, And how you approach others, Not judgmentally, Because how can you, Now, When you get what God has done for you, How can you still sit in judgment over others?

If you get grace, Then you start to exhibit grace, Not judgmentalism, Have a look at verse 12, Because this is what Jesus ends with, Matthew 7 verse 12, Therefore, Whatever you want others to do for you, Do also the same for them, For this is the law and the prophets, You know, This is the so-called golden rule, And even non-Christians know it well, It's actually, It's a principle, That's not unique to Christianity, There's versions of this rule, In multiple religions, This idea of, Do to others what you would have them do to you, But what is unique to Christianity, Is the ability to actually do it, Because it's only when you've experienced,

This relationship of grace, That Jesus earned on the cross, That you can, You can show it to others, Who don't deserve it, And so, Actually start doing this, Which is hard, Because people don't deserve it, The people around us, Don't deserve us to do this for them, To treat them like we would have them, Treat us, They haven't earned it, And so it's only when you're in this relationship, With grace, With God, That you can actually, Do this, You can show grace, To those who haven't deserved it, And it changes every aspect of your life, And all your relationships, Because you're, Because of this, Because of the gracious, God we have in this relationship, We have with Him, We are able to show grace, In our marriages, You are able, To actually, Fulfill the unconditional love, That you promised on your wedding day,

Without waiting for it to be earned, By your spouse, At work, You are able to be, Nice to the people, Who don't deserve it, And who no one else is nice to, And at home, Boys and girls with your siblings, You're able to, Not, Run to your parent, And tell on every wrong, Because you know, You're actually no better, That's what shows, That you're in, A right relationship, With God, That's what shows, That you've really received grace, Is that you can give it out, When you start giving out grace, In your relationships around you, That, That's the best indicator, That you've grasped it, And you, You've finally realized, This relationship of grace, You have with God, And, It turns out, As Jesus ends, That is the way, That we fulfill the very heart, Of all of God's laws, In the Bible, And so, Become the people,

[32 : 14] That He's made us to be, Let's pray, Oh Lord, We, We are overwhelmed, When we think of the grace, That you have showed us, We don't believe, Often that it's possible, That we deserve that, Because we don't, And Lord, We admit that we struggle, To really accept, That you accept us, Without any condition, And that you are a father, Always willing to, To hear us, To give us good things, Irrespective of, Whether we've earned it or not, Lord help us to realize this, Help us to grasp, That this is what Jesus, Has secured for us, This relationship with you, And as we do Lord, And as that becomes, A reality in our lives, Would you help us, To exhibit that kind of grace,

To those around us, And would you be glorified in it, In Jesus name, For the Lord, Amen, Eresene, And would you be glorified in it, In Jesus sudden,