



SERIES: July Series “OFF ROADING”

SPEAKER: DAN COKE

Tuesday, July 13, 2021

Scripture: Matthew 7:1-2/ Hebrews 12:14-15

TITLE: Criticizing Others

Criticism is the expression of disapproval of someone or something, based on perceived faults or mistakes. There are two types of criticism, positive and negative. Positive critique, though it may not always feel good, it leads to greater understanding. Negative criticism, not only does it not feel good, but it destroys confidence.

I'm sure you're familiar with the phrase: *“Don't cry over spilled milk.”* It's an encouragement to let some things go - things that have already happened and cannot be changed - the kind of circumstances where an individual already understands that they have fallen short. To criticize at that time would crush the spirit.

Maybe you sense this already in some of your relationships. You sense yourself getting dangerously close to crushing the spirits of those close to you. Or maybe you've already lost an important relationship because of your many criticisms. Either way, you need to be free from this mindset or you will sabotage relationships that God has given to you, to help you thrive in Christ. Breaking free of this mindset begins with understanding its origins.

A tendency to criticize begins with...

- 1) Judging others according to your expectations/standards.
- 2) Taking offense at others for falling short of your standards.
- 3) Refusing to forgive, to show mercy and/or extend grace to others.

Matthew 7:1-2 (ESV) addresses the first step to understanding why we can be so critical of others.

“Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.”

This passage forbids the sin of impartial judgments. It warns against prideful temptation, to avoid thinking that our thoughts are always equal to God's thoughts. It tells us to slow down, don't be hasty in our judgments, but trust God.

The second point, taking offense, follows quickly with the sin of impartial judgments. And offense will spread like a virus. Hebrews 12:14-15 warns against this:

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;

That root of bitterness that defiles many is planted with the seeds of offense. And that leads us to the final point: refusing to forgive, to show mercy and/or extend grace to others. Hurts, disappointment and prolonged frustrations can produce in us, what I like to call, “Gospel amnesia,” as in, we forget what God has done for us. Jesus told a parable in Matthew 18:21-35 that illustrates the danger of living with Gospel amnesia. I’m not going to read that passage for you today, but I’ll summarize it for you. God has forgiven us of a great debt that we could never pay, and by His grace, we can forgive others. We can get over offense. We can learn to stop tearing people down with our criticisms.

The Gospel reminds us, that though we were undeserving of the kindness and goodness of God, He offered it anyway. Even now, He offers forgiveness to you for your many criticisms of others. Now look to Christ and practice loving others like your Heavenly Father loves you. Amen.