

The Lakeview Lamp

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” - Psalm 119:105

October 21, 2007

Captious Critics

Irvin Himmel

(This article is a follow-up to last week’s sermon on constructive criticism. – TN)

The prophets of old severely denounced wickedness. They pointed out the shortcomings and iniquities of corrupt priests, covetous leaders, false prophets, and people who strayed from God’s statutes. Their exposure of immorality, idolatry, rebellion, and other sins made them unpopular. Their censure often was sharp and stinging.

There is a sense in which every preacher of the gospel is a critic. His work includes expounding the Scriptures, reproofing, rebuking, and exhorting (**2 Tim. 4:2**). He shows the right way and warns against wrong ways. He is not passive in his attitude toward unrighteousness.

All Christians must be alert to helping one another to avoid pitfalls. Jesus said, *“If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him”* (**Luke 17:3**). *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault . . .”* (**Matt. 18:15**). There is a proper sense in which each disciple can be called a critic.

It is in a distinctly different sense that I speak of critics in this article. I am referring to those who carp, quibble, wrangle, and are given to faultfinding. I speak of nitpickers, knockers, backbiters, sore heads, and complainers — people who are harshly judgmental and specialize in censuring others.

There is one thing for which I am thankful: that is, the class of critics just defined constitutes a small minority in most congregations.

Self-appointed critics test our patience. They will discourage and defeat us if we allow them to do so. They arouse our righteous indignation. They rock the boat unnecessarily and muddy the water when it could be crystal clear. They carp and scold constantly.

There is a story about a talented young musician who was depressed and dejected when he read the critics’ reviews of his recent concert. A famous composer comforted him by patting him on the back and remarking, “Remember, son, there is no city in the world where they have erected a statue in honor of a critic.”

Some young people who needed encouragement have been cut down mercilessly by critics in the church. Mothers struggling to teach their little ones to sit with the adults during church services have been harshly

reprimanded when they needed sympathy. Elders have been driven from the eldership by an endless barrage of complaints and castigations. Preachers have packed up and moved due to incessant and totally unjustified criticisms.

For those who have set themselves up in the business of being compulsive critics, I suggest that it does not require brains, training, or special skill to find fault. Remember this — no one ever made himself great by showing how small someone else is. It is much easier to point a finger than to lift a helping hand. A person does not move up by running others down. Blowing out another's candle will not make your light shine brighter! If you must look for faults, lay aside your telescope and use a mirror.

Some who loudly criticize others about the way they are rearing their children need to look at their own kids. Brethren who downgrade the Bible class teachers ought to get up and try their hand at teaching. Those who quickly condemn the mistakes of others ought to soberly reflect on their own blunders.

Let us strive to be fruitful workers, not habitual fault-finders. Let us be dedicated builders, not senseless and malicious wreckers. Let us encourage and admonish, not spending our time and efforts in censure and kicking. Let us show an attitude of compassion and understanding, not a disposition to be harsh and judgmental. If we have criticisms to offer, let them be constructive and helpful, not unfair, rude, and mean-spirited. We can be firm and uncompromising in our stand for truth and opposition to error without becoming captious (made only for the sake of argument or faultfinding; fond of catching others in mistakes; quick to find fault; quibbling; carping - TN) critics. We can earnestly contend for the faith without being cantankerous cavilers.



“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,” (2 Tim 2:24-25).

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!”

Psalm 103:1

Family News

Virginia Bryant is suffering from back pain but can't have any more shots until December.

Neil Cobern's mother fell and broke her neck. She is at Skyline.

Quinton Coppage fell this week but is doing better now.

Elmo Ferrell remains in room 101-A at NHC.

See www.caringbridge.org/visit/nathanandsandlyn for updates on the **Fultz's** who continue to improve.

James Hunt has had some normal bleeding since his lung biopsy last Wednesday. He goes back to the doctor Monday about his shots.

Cotton Read did not have a good week.

Laura Reed has been moved to Sumner Regional, room 350.

Peggy Ridings, Sandra Boyd's mother, is at Sumner Regional with a broken hip.

Howard Smith, Gail Garrison's brother-in-law, died Wednesday at the age of 93. His funeral was Friday.

Ame White had spots removed on both shoulders this past week.

Bill White had a gall bladder attack Thursday night. He has a follow-up doctor's appoint on Tuesday.

Robert Wray needs meals. Attend meeting up front tonight for details.

Out of town, traveling, or visiting: **Ken and Rhonda Hull** (Spain, home tomorrow), **Robert and Candy Jenkins** (AL am, back pm), **Pat Richards** (Gatlinburg).

New Reports from men we support: **Bob Nichols** (Japan).

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"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thes 5:16-18).