

Billy Graham: Criticizing Your Pastor Is a Sin

Q: Why do some people seem to enjoy criticizing their pastor? I'm in a civic organization with a couple of friends from another church, and it seems like all they talk about is their pastor's shortcomings. Should I say something to them about this?

A: No pastor is perfect, of course—but if God has called someone to be a pastor and has sent them to serve a particular church, then they should be helped and encouraged in every way possible. The Bible says, “Who can lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless?” (1 Samuel 26:9, NIV).

Does this mean pastors should always be above criticism—even if they neglect their responsibilities or otherwise are at fault? No, it doesn’t—but most churches have ways of dealing with such matters through their ruling board or denominational structure. Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth that “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Sadly, I have known of church members who seem to enjoy criticizing their pastor—and sometimes they keep doing it pastor after pastor. I’ve never known why; perhaps they do it to just to get attention. But whatever their reason, it is wrong, and it is a sin in the eyes of God. Not only does it cause dissension in the church, but it means their heart and mind are closed to the teaching of God’s Word.

Pray for an opportunity to speak with your friends about their attitude, urging them not only to avoid criticizing their pastor but to do all they can to support and help this individual. Especially encourage them to pray for their pastor. Pray too for your own church and its pastoral staff,

that they truly may “Be shepherds of God’s flock ... eager to serve” (1 Peter 5:2).