

How to Break Free From a Critical Spirit

A critical spirit can be easy to see in others, yet operate undetected in ourselves. Everyone has to confront how they will deal with the temptations to live in a critical mindset.

There can be nothing more draining than someone with a critical spirit, but when you're used to feeding it, breaking free can be challenging. So many live in criticism so much, it feels good to them. I have observed that breaking free can be like a drug addict journey; criticism becomes a drug.

In his book, *Possessing Joy*, Steve Backlund defines a critical spirit *as an obsessive attitude of disapproval and finding fault*. I find that people who live in a lot of negativity very easily lean into a critical spirit's voice. The temptation becomes strong for those who have not develop a strong compass for hope and goodness. Criticism is actually easy to do, especially because negativity is easy to find. It takes a real overcomer to habitually look beyond criticism and become a hope infuser.

Discerning a Critical Spirit

Here are some signs that people operate with a critical spirit:

- In general, they have a negative lens on life. They might deny it in themselves, but everyone else can see it. They move to the negative side very easily.
- They have a hard time focusing on loving relationship, without always addressing the negative about someone or something.
- When they talk about a person or situation, they focus on the negative with little helpful solutions.

- Their focus is on flaws.
- They complain a lot.
- They don't know how to live without complaining about something.
- They're always upset about something.
- Regarding people who are succeeding or doing well, the critical spirit shows up to find something wrong with them to focus on.
- They spend most of their communication focusing on what they are against, but very little time highlighting the good they are for.
- They are rarely pleased.

What Fuels a Critical Spirit?

Insecurity: Quite often, criticism flows through people who are not very secure in how they see themselves. We often see others through how we see ourselves. Therefore, we project the toxicity onto others that we actually carry in ourselves.

Self-Accusation: Criticism is fueled by an accusing spirit, especially in the words we speak. Being critical of others helps us to avoid dealing with ourselves; keeping us from confronting the issues of our own heart.

Bitterness: Criticism gains momentum in people that have unresolved bitterness and unforgiveness issues in their life. They have unhealed disappointments that seep into their perspective.

Comparison/Competition: When we are insecure about who we are and where we are, criticizing others is an easy manifestation. We often criticize those who threaten our insecurity and lack of growth.

Perfectionism: Those with a critical spirit are hard to please and are never satisfied. This makes relationship with them a miserable experience. Very little life and hope flows from them.

Joylessness: You cannot be critical and filled with joy at the same time. It's helpful to look at problems, but with the mindset of finding hope and solutions. There's nothing more draining to joy than someone who finds fault in something.

Letting Go of Criticism

For those who want to make a change, letting go of a critical spirit can actually be scary. Some even think if they don't criticize people, then bad behavior or wrong things will continue. When the facts are, the more you highlight the negative, the more it will grow.

That's why we often fail to get free. We focus on it so much that we give it power.

Steps to Getting Free

1. Participate in a Negativity Fast. There's nothing more effective in breaking our negative patterns than doing a negativity fast. It can be one of the most challenging habits to apply, but one of the most freeing when it becomes a part of our life.

2. Get Accountable: Tell someone who loves you and can hold you accountable about your desire to change. Give them permission to call you out when you are in that rut, so you can catch yourself in the act. This can be humbling, but it will get to the heart of change in your life.

3. Get Around Hope-Filled People: This can be rare to find, but it's worth the search. Find people that know how to find hope in the midst of challenging circumstances. Hang out with them. Learn from them. Glean from their perspective.

4. Confront Poor Self-Image: Break agreement with the negative ways you see yourself. We flow in grace way more effectively when we process it for ourselves authentically. The next time you criticize someone, think, is this really my issue I am

throwing at them?

5. Break Agreement with Criticism: Make a decision today that you will no longer allow criticism to be a part of your lens on life. Start declaring that you will look for hope in all things!

Question: What are some helpful ways you have found to overcome a critical spirit?

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