

How to Handle Criticism

First Corinthians 4:3-4 says: "I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me."

This message is a word that is relevant for anybody who has difficulty in handling criticism. Maybe you know what it is to be criticized. Maybe you have had enough. Maybe it was by parents, and others are still doing it even though you have grown up. Maybe you know what it is to live with a nagging sibling or parent who is always putting you down. Maybe it is your husband criticizing you. Maybe somebody at the office. Perhaps somebody at university, in college, maybe a friend. Maybe a Christian with some stature criticized you, and because of who it is, you take it seriously. Whatever the situation, Paul shows us how to handle it.

Many of us just fall apart when somebody criticizes us or sits in judgment on anything we have done. We just cannot handle it. But Paul was not afraid; he was unintimidated.

The reason is he knew what they were trying to do. They were trying somehow to punish him verbally. Do you know what it is to be punished verbally? Have you ever punished anyone in this way? You are putting them down. Perhaps you are wanting them to feel guilty.

But the fact of the matter is that whenever you concede that the other person is trying to punish you, you immediately know that they are acting in fear. This does not mean, however, that we should not listen to criticism. We need each other. But it is sheer judgmentalism such as Paul was receiving that we must throw off.

That means that when anybody criticizes you and you are afraid that what they are saying about you is going to hurt you,

remember the words of Peter: "Be self-controlled and alert" (1 Pet. 5:8). Do you know that the way to get the devil to leave you alone is to let him see that it just does not bother you? You resist him and refuse to let him intimidate you. That is the first thing to do in response to criticism.

Excerpted from When God Says "Well Done!" (Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1993).