

Navigating Criticism on the Road to Redemption

Christian controversy just seems to be a thing these days.

It bridges denominations, genders and borders, and when a big name in the Christian sphere stumbles or even falls on their face (metaphorically speaking), there is an army of online content creators waiting to pick their situation apart and offer their audiences a “hot take.”

Others are scholars and seasoned commentators such as charismatic leader Dr. Michael Brown, who sat down with Charisma Media founder Stephen Strang on the Strang Report podcast to address the recent criticism of Benny Hinn and whether it has been useful or destructive.

So how are Spirit-filled believers able to tell the difference? How can we ensure that we are using proper discernment in these foundation-shaking events that cause some to lose faith in the church?

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Well, we must discern between destructive and constructive criticism of our words and actions, Brown says.

“There’s a criticism that’s destructive, that only tears down that looks for the worst. That is not fair. That is not evenhanded before the Lord, that does not receive good reports, but only bad reports that thrive on negativity,” Brown warns.

“But there’s another criticism which is healthy, and life giving. And the Bible is full of examples,” he continues. “...So there’s a criticism that’s healthy, that’s good, even if we

don't like the way it comes, and through whom it comes."

One safety net that Dr. Brown points to, that has been sorely missing in the church, is accountability.

"We've had a real problem in the American church in general, with so many independent churches, but then in the charismatic church, in particular, with unaccountability. And we can just speak words, prophetic words, and whether they come to pass or not, we just keep going," Brown says.

"There seems to be little accountability. And it seems, you know, big ministries, just keep going without a problem, but we're living in a different day now," he adds.

Accountability protects ministries, leaders and congregations as a preventative measure, but also when false witness is brought up. Because when someone is being held accountable, they are more aware of their actions and not giving place to sin because they are under a close watch by a trusted group of believers.

Much of the criticism that has been leveled at Hinn, both warranted and not, has been that his words ring empty because he has repented of certain actions in the past, yet continues to practice them.

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Brown believes that a place of true repentance will yield a change of how we operate in ministry.

"People want to see genuine fruit of repentance," says Brown. "If we really humble ourselves, take ownership for what we did, acknowledge it. Don't just brush it off as heresy hunting, embrace it, bring forth fruit of repentance, people will welcome that. And those who still reject it, hey, you

can't help them. You can't help everybody. But others who see genuine repentance, genuine change, though, rejoice."

Regardless of all the hoopla surrounding any particular big-name ministry leader, no matter if the accusations levelled against someone are true or false, all will be revealed when we stand before God And our lives will be put under a "holy spotlight," for which we will answer.

"The same spotlight before God is on all of us. In other words, Benny Hinn may have a bigger platform than someone else, but in God's sight, we're all under a holy spotlight, where we've blown it," Brown says.

"So let's humble ourselves. Let's get low. As we do, God gives grace to the humble, He forgives, He restores."

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