

WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE SPEAKS CRITICALLY TO YOU ABOUT A LEADER IN THE CHURCH OR SOME OTHER BELIEVER

(Kaikohe CF - 20/2/97 – EKB)

1. **It is important that you do not remain silent and listen to critical, judgmental words** spoken against a church leader or another believer. “Silence gives consent” and it is agreement with what is being said.
 2. **Do not let your ears and mind, and soul and spirit, be polluted by words of criticism,** judgment, bitterness or condemnation of another follower of Jesus, *Mat 7:1-3, Jam 4:11,12, Rom 2:1-3*. God’s Word tells us not to speak or think this way of another.
 3. **Behind the words you hear is what God’s Word calls a “root of bitterness,”** *Heb 12:15*, which will defile your spirit and mind. It will also “sour” your relationship with the person being criticized.
 4. In most cases, where a Christian appears to be falling short of expected behaviour, or is in fact failing in some way, **he or she is genuinely trying to serve God** as best as they know how. They are not faultless, but blameless before God and have a clear conscience, *1Tim 1:5*.
 5. *James 3:2* says, “**we all stumble in many things**” and *Rom 2:1-3* says, “We practice the same things as those we judge.” E.g. Driving the car, we observe and disapprove of another driver’s foolish manoeuvre but before long we have also driven carelessly.
 6. It is seldom that a believer is knowingly and deliberately following a wrong course of action to deceive, defraud and take advantage of others for personal gain, *Rom 14:1-4*. We have many differences e.g. food, drink, days, and we must refuse to judge.
 7. Where we observe someone acting in a way that we do not agree with, the Bible gives us clear guidelines on how to proceed.
Mat 18:15-20 directs us to go and see the person concerned first, and talk about the issues of disagreement, before talking to anyone else. Hopefully there will be understanding and agreement. If not let there be respect, agreement to differ, or else flow on with *Mat 18:15-20*.
- Other scriptures that apply: *Lk 17:3,4, 1Cor 5:1-13, Ac 15:2, 1Tim 5:1,2,19-21, Rev 2:2, 1Cor 6:1-9, 1Jn 4:1, Ac 17:11*.
8. We need to remind ourselves that certain areas of life need to be carefully monitored so that we do not fall into sin. These are:
 - the sexual - moral area,
 - the way we handle money matters,
 - the temptation to pride and exalting self over others,
 - the use of stimulants, drugs and alcohol,
 - the possibility of listening to false doctrine and being deceived.
 9. In most cases, where we become aware of another Christian acting in a way we do not

approve of, they are actually doing their best to please God, as we stated in No 4.

10. Therefore when someone comes to you speaking critically of a leader or another Christian, suggest to that person that they **forgive him/her, release him/her from their judgment, and pray for God's blessing on him/her**, as in *Col 1:9-11, Eph 1:16-19, Mk 11:25,26, Ac 26:18*.
11. Then say, "I know he/she has a good heart, and is trying to serve God as best as he can, therefore there is no judgment against him, even though he makes mistakes and fails at times."
12. Also, "We all make many mistakes," as it says in *Jam 3:2, 1Jn 1:8, Ecc 7:20, Rom 2:1-3*.
13. **Further, "When we judge and condemn someone else, we who also make mistakes, are judging ourselves."** *Rom 2:1-3, Mat 7:1-5, Jam 4:11-12, Rom 14:1-4, Mat 18:21-35*.
14. **And, "We all need mercy and forgiveness not judgment."** *Mat 9:13, Mic 6:8, Mat 23:23, Jn 8:11, Jam 2:13, Ps 107:1,2*. God's love for us is expressed through His mercy
Tit 3:5,6.
15. When a believer is doing their best, sincerely trying to please God, and yet makes many mistakes, they are blameless before God. We have to make a distinction between being faultless and blameless. No one is faultless, but God requires us to be blameless, always maintaining a clear conscience before Him.
1Tim 1:5, Gen 17:1 – "blameless not faultless".
16. Jacob is an example of a believer who was full of faults, *Gen 27:19,20,24*, but before God he was blameless. Jacob had a heart after God even though he made many bad mistakes and when God met him as he was running away from Esau's wrath, there was not one word of judgment, criticism or condemnation from the Lord, *Gen 28:10-19*.