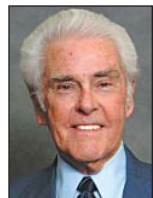


Redeemed from a critical spirit

A critical spirit damages one's life. Unfortunately, the Bible is full of examples of how a critical and



John Howell

negative spirit has hindered God's word among his people.

Two dominant illustrations are the presence and influence of criticism and jealousy. The critical spirit can express itself by finding fault, censuring others and verbalizing these attitudes. Jealousy involves being envious or resentful of a person or a person's advantages. When we play the comparison game, it becomes easy to fall into attitudes of criticism or jealousy. Comparing ourselves to others can lead to disappointment and dissatisfaction, and such attitudes only lead to further problems.

From the opening chapters of the Bible, jealousy affected family relationships. Abel and Cain were the first two sons of Adam and Eve. Abel was a herdsman while Cain worked the soil. Each brought some of their products to God.

"The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry and his face was downcast" (Genesis 4:4-5). As a consequence of his anger, "Cain attacked his brother and killed him" (Genesis 4:8).

Many years later Abraham's wife Rebekah was pregnant with twins. When her time of delivery came, 'the first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment, so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel, so he was named Jacob....

The boys grew up, and Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac,

who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob" (Genesis 25:24-29).

Another example of jealousy and a critical spirit is Joseph's relationship to his brothers in Israel's family. "When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him." Consequently they sold Joseph to a band of Ishmaelite traders who took him to Egypt (Genesis 37:3-8, 28).

Further expressions of jealousy and resentment were demonstrated between King Saul and David (1 Samuel 12:1ff) and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

Conflict among the Israelites on their journey (Numbers 12:1-3). Our text takes us back to Numbers 11 and 12, where the Israelites had to deal with anger, critical attitudes and resentment while on the journey from Egypt toward the promised land.

During the journey a series of complaints erupted against God and his leader Moses. They complained about the hardships of the journey and having only manna but no meat for their daily diet. Even Moses complained to God about the problems of leading the thousands of Israelites.

God instructed him to appoint 70 elders to assist him in his responsibilities. He brought forth the 70 elders and had them stand around the Tent [of Meeting]. Then the Lord came down in a cloud and spoke with Moses, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the 70 elders.

In the midst of all of these challenges, God rejected a critical spirit toward Moses by Aaron and Miriam (Numbers 12:4-9). Moses had already married Zipporah, a Midianite woman, and his siblings may have resented a Cushite woman becoming part of the family; perhaps some racism showing up!

Bible Studies for Life

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Scripture: Numbers 12:1-11,
13-15

But the main complaint from Miriam and Aaron was that God had not prophesied through them as he did through Moses. The Lord called Moses, Miriam and Aaron to the Tent of Meeting to reject their complaint.

God's discipline is intended for restoration (Numbers 12:10-15). "The anger of the Lord burned against them, and he left them" from the cloud in which he had appeared. After the Lord left, Moses saw that Miriam was punished with leprosy. Aaron confessed the sinfulness of their actions and begged for healing from Moses, the humble man (Numbers 12:3).

So Moses cried out to the Lord, "O God, please heal her!" God agreed to heal her but she was to remain outside the camp for seven days. "So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days and the people did not move on till she was brought back" (v. 15).

In the book of Judges there is an interesting story of forgiveness for an assumed plight against a people. Gideon had attacked and killed Midian armies. When Gideon was asked, "Why have you treated us like this? 'Why didn't you call us when you went to fight Midian?' And they criticized him sharply."

Notice his response: "But he answered them, 'What have I accomplished compared to you?... God gave Oreg and Zeeb, the Midianite leaders, into your hands. What was I able to do compared to you?' At this, their resentment against him subsided'" (Judges 8:1-3). In this situation, humble responses led to reconciliation.

John Howell is academic dean emeritus at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.