

## FASTING FROM CRITICISM

Catherine Marshall...

The Lord continues to deal with me about my critical spirit, convicting me that I have been wrong to judge any person or situation. (Matt. 7:1-2) One morning last week He gave me an assignment: for one day I was to go on a "fast" from criticism. I was not to criticize anybody about anything...

I noticed that my critical comments were not missed. The federal government, the judicial system, and the institutional church could apparently get along fine without my penetrating observations. But still I didn't see what this fast from criticism was accomplishing -- until mid-afternoon.

For years I had been praying for one talented young man whose life had gotten sidetracked. Perhaps my prayers for him had been too negative. That afternoon a specific, positive vision for this life was dropped into my mind with God's unmistakable hallmark on it -- joy.

Ideas began to flow in a way I had not experienced in years. Now it was apparent what the Lord wanted me to see. My critical nature had not corrected a single one of the multitudinous things I found fault with. What it had done was to stifle my own creativity -- in prayer -- in relationships, perhaps even in writing -- ideas that He wanted to give me.

What He is showing me so far can be summed up as follows:

1. A critical spirit focuses us on ourselves and makes us unhappy. We lose perspective and humor.
2. A critical spirit blocks the positive, creative thoughts God longs to give us.
3. A critical spirit can prevent good relationships between individuals and often produces retaliatory criticism.
4. Criticism blocks the work of the Spirit of God: love, goodwill, mercy.
5. Whenever we see something genuinely wrong in another person's behavior, rather than criticizing him or her directly, or -- far worse -- gripe about him behind his back, we should ask the Spirit of God to do the correction needed.

Convicted of the true destructiveness of a critical mind, on my knees I am repeating this prayer:

"Lord, I repent of this sin of judgment. I am deeply sorry for having committed so gross an offense against you and against myself so continually. I claim Your promise of forgiveness and seek a new beginning."