

# L MESSAGE

## Outside Criticism

They condemn what they do not understand. —Edgar Quinet

### Reflection

Not long ago I used to think that criticism which came from someone within my ministry was far greater to deal with than criticism from without (that which came from a source outside of my ministry). I was very wrong!

When the criticism comes from within, as painful as it is, you at least have a chance to deal with it and to work with those criticising (if anonymity is not an issue). When someone from outside criticises you, you are somewhat powerless to respond. So how does one cope in this sort of situation?

Steve Stroope promotes the *O'lay approach*. Using the metaphor of a bull fighter stepping aside and letting the criticism miss all vital organs! O'lay! I like this thinking but more needs to be said!

There are some filters that we can use in this instance:

**Vision filter:** Does the person understand what we are trying to achieve?

**Philosophy filter:** Does this person understand the way we do ministry and our reasoning?

**Relevance Filter:** Does the opinion/criticism that is offered matter?

**Cover Filter:** Is the criticism uncovering a truth that had not previously been seen or identified?

**Reasoning Filter:** What is the reason for such an attack? What is that person wanting to achieve? Are they entitled to have a say on this particular issue? Have they been hurt before, and this is their response?

The answers to these question do not necessarily equip us better to address a person who is criticising, but they do equip us better to be able to process the concerns.

People outside of what you are doing, may not understand what you are on about or why you are doing something, but they will go to the point of criticising you and what you are doing because of three reasons:

1. They have been hurt by something that has or hasn't occurred, and are responding out of that hurt? OR
2. They are jealous of the success you are having and want to tear it down. OR
3. Their value system is being challenged by your action. E.g. #1. They are concerned that you will be causing hurt, discomfort, pain or struggle to someone/some group or something which they value highly. E.g. #2 They are being affected and forced to accommodate the affect you are having on them, that is against their wishes.

My experience on the whole is that some people just enjoy finding fault in anything that occurs to the point that they will stick their nose in where it is not wanted, needed or welcome. But the reason they are doing this comes back to one of the above.

So when criticism from the outside comes your way – O'lay!