

L MESSAGE

Justification

Reflection

When speaking to a mentor of mine on the subject of criticism, he encouraged me with these words: 'Freud was asked, "How do you respond to criticism?" He replied, "I write another book." What does that mean? He was saying that he would not go down the pathway of justifying himself. Rather, he would redouble his efforts and pour himself into his next project.'

How we yearn to justify ourselves. How we want *others* to know the 'why' of what we do, when they criticize our efforts. Unfortunately though, these *others*, are not the ones that really want to know the 'why'. They are the ones who want to tear down that which is good.

As I look at Jesus' life I saw that he did explain the why, but not to everyone. He seemed to be able to discern the condition of people's hearts. Some were asking because they wanted to know and understand more, others were asking because they wanted more of a reason to argue their point of view. Jesus disregarded the comments of those who came to tear down, but was very open with those who were genuinely seeking to understand. This is how we should engage with our critiques: Consider their heart, if it is of genuine concern and desire for greater understanding, share with them your *why*. If it is not then don't justify yourself.

When we justify ourselves several things occur.

- We engage in the critics fight, on their terms.
- We lose our position of being able to direct their thinking.
- We render ourselves at the mercy, not of our vision, but of the opinions of others.

When you make the move to justify yourself you surrender the power you have in that situation, and why? To protect yourself? To protect your vision? To protect your name? Let those things speak through your actions not your justification.

**Ref. Matthew 4:1-11; 10:14;
15:12; 21:23-27; 22:46; 27:13-14**

Insight

When criticism darkens your door try this approach: "Thank you for that insight I'll take that under prayerful consideration." Then go on your way.

"As I predicted the book was met with outrage that was so hysterical that it became comic and ludicrous rather than offensive. Not one of those who attacked the book ever challenged its basic themes. The attacks were in the nature of childish personal abuse or picked on very minor matters - which is always a sure indication that the reviewer is not reviewing the book but prefers to attack the author. This is a pity because it is a serious subject which needs much more attention than it gets.

"It was Einstein who once said: 'Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds.' It does not follow that violent opposition from mediocre minds qualifies one automatically as a great spirit but it does suggest that the violence of the opposition sometimes indicates emotions rather than value."

- Edward de Bono.