

Overcoming a Critical Spirit

We'd like to talk to you about overcoming a critical spirit. Too many people today are focused on what's wrong and not what's right

A lot of people have the habit of seeing the negative. They can walk into a brand new, beautifully and tastefully decorated house and, instead of seeing the thousands of things that are right, they'll point out one little small scratch on the floor. What does that tell us? They're drawn to the negative. They don't see the rose, they see the thorn.

There are two types of people. There are fly-like people who are attracted to gossip, politics, who complain all the time about the boss, about the job, about the working conditions. Then there are the bees. The bees are looking for the honey; they are looking for what's good: what builds us up and challenges us, what inspires us.

Now each one of us has a choice before us. We can develop an eye for the good or we can develop a critical eye. This is especially important in relationships. You can train yourself to see people's strengths or their weaknesses. You can focus on what you like about your spouse and magnify that, or you can focus about what you don't like: the little things that annoy you. You can get into this kind of a habit and, instead of recognizing and magnifying the things that originally attracted you to marry your spouse you can get into a habit of magnifying the little idiosyncrasies that annoy you. You'll forget the reason you got married in the first place, because you're magnifying the wrong things.

In our marriage ceremony, there's a segment for both the bride and the groom to vow in advance they're not going to get annoyed about any habit of their spouse. They are going to agree in advance...not that they aren't going to see their spouse not picking up their socks nor hear that nasal twang in their voice, but the vow is "I will not dwell upon or magnify that." (Someone in audience gives a big honking sneeze with a loud nasal sound) Wow! We all heard that but we not going to dwell upon it (Laughter). Of course you can't help but notice those things but you make a vow that you're not going to magnify, you're not going to dwell on the

annoying habits. Rather you're going to pick out the good things and you're going to magnify and dwell on those.

Instead of saying "Oh you never take out the trash and you never spend time with me you're always late." We need to recognize that people respond a lot more to praise than they do to criticism. Instead of nagging your husband about not mowing the lawn, why not tell him how good he looks out there with his shirt off? Then don't be surprised if he's out there mowing the lawn every single day.

Where is the problem here? The problems are not with your spouse, not with your job, not with your circumstances, the problem is with us. It's a heart condition. Someone said, "When looking for faults, don't use a microscope. Use a mirror."

One lady used to look out her kitchen window across her backyard into the neighbor's backyard where the neighbor had a line for drying wash. She used to say to her husband, "This neighbor lady, her clothes are so dirty and dingy. She doesn't know how to wash. I wonder if she even uses detergent. I can't believe it!" She lets her family wear those dirty clothes. Day after day after day, week after week, she made the same comments to her husband. One morning, she went into the kitchen and she looked out the window to see her neighbor's clothes are bright and sparkly. She called out. "Honey, come look, this neighbor lady finally learned how to wash. I wonder what happened?" Her husband sauntered into the kitchen, said "I'll tell you what happened. Early this morning I got up and I washed our kitchen windows."

What was her problem? It was what she was looking through. Her filter, her window was tainted. If you see negative things everywhere you turn, the problem's not external. The problem's internal. The problem is in your heart.

Maybe it's not the world that needs to change. Maybe we need to break the habit of seeing the bad rather than the good. Maybe we've trained ourselves to be cynical and sarcastic. If I'm constantly finding fault it might be time to get out the Windex and clean off my heart.

That's why we chant Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. It's the Windex to clean the dust and the dirt that is accumulated on the heart since millions and millions of years.

Your unclean heart will go with you wherever you go. Let's say you have a problem at your job with one of your coworkers. You think that by leaving that job and getting another one, you'll be able to avoid the stress. The problem is your critical spirit is going to go with you wherever you go until you decide to do something about it. If you leave one job because one co-worker is bothering you, I will bet you dimes to dollars that when you get to the next job there will be two bothersome co-workers there.

Maybe you leave one wife because you don't feel she has everything that you need. I will guarantee you that after living with the second life for some time you'll come to realize that she doesn't have everything you need either. You could go through your whole life living lower than your potential unless you learn how to clean the window. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

I heard about a hyena who fell into a vat of blue dye. When he emerged all animals thought. "This blue creature must be a divine avatar come from the celestial realms to rule us." They put the hyena up on a throne, gave him sumptuous delicacies to eat and to drink. Every suggestion he made they couldn't run fast enough to follow. The hyena was thinking "This is not bad, this is a pretty good gig." He took full advantage and became dictatorial, tyrannical, puffed up with his influence and power.

One day, after a few weeks, there were a group of hyenas off in the distance, yipping and yowling. The blue hyena tried to shut himself up. He tried to control himself, but finally just couldn't resist anymore and let out with his own yipping and yowling. Upon hearing this, the other animals said, "We've been duped. We've been tricked. This is just another hyena." They dethroned him, gave him a good whipping.

What's my point? You cannot change the quality of your life just by dipping yourself in a vat of blue dye or by any external manipulation or arrangement. You have to work from the inside out.

A lot of people are too quick to find fault, to be critical. If there's someone who's not exactly like them, that in and of itself, means there is something wrong with them. You often hear people say, "Well I'd never wear those clothes, I'd never send my kids to that school, I'd never drive that car, I'd never take a vacation on this economy," Here's the key, you are not them. You don't know what you'd do because you haven't walked in their shoes. How someone spends their money, what kind of a car they drive, where and when they go on vacation, it's none of your business. I have a hard enough time trying to run my own life without trying to run someone else's life.

It is said that one of the best ways to keep the mind clean is to mind our own business and one of the best ways to mind our own business is to chant holy names of the Lord. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. What is, the real business of the human form of life?

We get it from Lord Jesus Christ: two things 1) "Love the Lord thy God with thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might." Attempting this, one nourishes the seed of Love of God which is dormant within everyone's heart. We water that seed by chanting Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. In one passage of scripture it asks, "Is it possible to chant the names of God on a regular, consistent, daily basis and not develop love of God?" What do you think the answer is? Yes or no? The answer is no, it's not possible. If you want to develop love of God then you are already reassured by scripture that if you chant regularly on a daily basis you WILL DOUBTLESSLY develop love of God. Now it's up to you.

2) Love your neighbor as thyself. If you develop love of the Father, the Root of all beings, what happens? If you water the root of the tree the flowers, leaves, fruits are also automatically nourished. If you do that one thing then every other purpose is served.

You can't love each and every one of the six billion people on this planet, just like you cannot nourish the tree by watering each flower, each twig and leaf. But you can nourish the tree by watering the root. You can in fact, not only love God, achieve love of God, by chanting Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, but you also come to love your fellow living beings.

Thus one of the best ways to mind our own business is to chant the Holy Names of the Lord. And at the same time not be nosey. Nosey people are critical people.

I heard a story about some old ladies in church. The minister was spouting fire and brimstone, talking anti-drugs, and the ladies said "Tell it like it is, preacher Hallelujah!" Then he talked against alcoholism and "Tell it like it is preacher! Go for it! Tell them young whippersnappers!" Then he talked about the problem they had in their congregation of gossip, criticism, fault finding. The ladies became real quiet in the back of the church and one of them said to the other, "Before he was preaching, now he's just meddling."

We want to hear the latest details, the juicy gossip. We want to get the scoop. Why? Not so we can help the person. We just want to hear something juicy so then we can go on Facebook or pick up the phone and tell our friends, "Did you hear about so and so and such and such?"

We had the festival of Colors last Saturday and Sunday. We are strongly anti-drugs.. And we're not only anti-drug, we're anti-alcohol and we're not only anti-drug and anti-alcohol, we are also anti cigarettes, and not only are we anti-drug and anti-alcohol and anti-cigarettes we are also anti meat. We don't believe that the killing and consumption of dead flesh is in anyway helpful to one's spiritual advancement.

On our website there are big graphics of no drugs, no alcohol, no cigarettes, and no meat. The same graphic is at the entrance to the event. When everyone comes in they see it. The same message is given by the MC on the stage, who is me. All the musicians that come one after another all day long are vegetarians, they're non-smokers, they're non-drinkers, and not takers of drugs.

All the music is about being clean and pure and excavating your own spiritual self. We have security people who search everyone's bags before coming in.

And in spite of all of that the Deseret News comes out with an article headlined, "Oregon Man Busted for Drugs while Attending Color Festival at the Krishna Temple." Come to read the article, he was in Hobble Creek Canyon driving erratically. The police pulled him over and they found some ecstasy and they said "did you come from Oregon to sell at the festival of colors?" He denied it. He said "no" and yet the headline of the Deseret News and KSL said that Oregon man busted for selling drugs while attending Festival of Colors.

This is a good example of critical mentality. There was actually no substance, no basis to the story but you get a drug bust and you get the festival of colors and you want to sell some newspapers and you want people to watch your television station so "drug bust and festival of colors, festival of colors and drug bust."

Not only that but I go to the Salt Lake Temple every Saturday night. We have a service and one of our congregational members who is new, first thing when I walk through the door (I'd been dealing with this fallout all week long and the first thing I hear when I walk in is "Did you hear about that drug bust at the temple during the Festival of Colors?" This is one of our own congregational members. I said, "Give me a break. We are here to talk about Krishna." Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

If someone criticized us and we have some dirt on them, we are so tempted to get back at them by telling everybody what we know. When that happens, just switch, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. Everybody is a divine spark of God. Everybody is created as sons and daughters of the King of kings. Everybody has the DNA of God inside them. They may have made bad choices. Who hasn't? Can you say that you haven't made bad choices? Would you like grace in your life? Would you like forgiveness or would you like me to hold that over you and nag you about it the rest of your life? My guess is you'd like grace. So if you want to receive grace in your life, you'd better be prepared to give it to other people.

500 years ago Krishna was on the planet as the devotional incarnation of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He had a great disciple named Haridas Thakur. Haridas Thakur was born a Muslim, but somewhere or other in his youth he adopted the practice of chanting Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. He chanted it 23 hours a day. 300,000 times a day. He became famous as a great saint all over the land.

There was a Muslim magistrate nearby who thought, "He's born a Muslim. What's he doing with this Hindu practice of chanting the names of God?" This Muslim, this man with the critical mentality hired a prostitute to approach the young, good looking Haridas Thakur at his lonely hut in the forest. The Muslim's idea was that she would seduce him and then his reputation would be ruined. But rather than this prostitute seducing Haridas Thakur, after three nights of visiting him, she gave up her sinful lifestyle. While Haridas Thakur left to go somewhere else, she took his place, and began chanting Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

The king soon discovered this fault finding Muslim he was cheating on the tax money that he was collecting. The king took his house, he took his property, he put him in jail and his family ended up on the street. That's a lesson when you try to hurt others by criticism, gossip and fault finding alternately you end up hurting yourself and your family.

Why? We're all in this together. Another's success is our success. Another's failure is our failure. We may not agree with someone but that doesn't mean you have to go around bad mouthing them. I don't know about you but I need God's protection, I need God's grace in my life so I'm not going to pick on people, I'm not going to kick them when they're down, I'm not I'm not going to jump on their failures, I'm not going to criticize their faults. These things have a way of boomeranging back on you.

We don't claim to be perfect. Not every statement, not every deed, not every mood of ours is perfect, but we do know we're doing the best that we can to keep Krishna first place in our lives.

The perennial question everybody always asks. "If we were in the spiritual world where life is eternal and full of bliss and knowledge, why did we come here? There was nothing wrong there, it was perfection itself and yet somehow or other we ended up in this material world, exiled from our spiritual home." Why? Nothing was wrong there, but what was wrong was our own critical mentality, our own critical spirit.

Another time, Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had adopted the renounced order of life, which means you travel a lot, eat very little, sleep on the ground. He was staying overnight somewhere in a grass hut, sleeping on the dirt. Another fault finder came to visit him. His name was Ramachandra Puri. While he was visiting Lord Chaitanya he noticed a bunch of ants on the floor. He declared, this self styled critic, that this sanyasi (Mahaprabhu), this renunciate, "Publicly he makes a show of sleeping on the ground and eating very little, but privately he is gorging himself on sweets. How do I know? Because ants, how could it be otherwise, there are all these ants here." There was no truth in what he said. It all came from his fault finding imagination. As a result he was struck with leprosy.

In the same way, there was no fault in Krishna or the spiritual world, but the fault was in us: even in the most ideal of circumstances, fault finding reared its ugly head. That's how we ended up in this world of birth, death, disease, and old age. There was nothing wrong there except our dirty heart.

Now let me ask you this. Do you think that Krishna is going to let us back home back to Godhead where life is eternal, full of bliss, and knowledge without our changing our fault finding mentality? If that's the cause of our fall, then we need to address that directly in order to get reinstatement. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

Though at some point in the distant past we were critical of God and we were critical of God's kingdom, He did not, nor will He ever, hold it against us. So high minded is He, that in spite of our having criticized Him, that He still never ceases trying to bless us, to favor us, and to bring us back home back to Godhead.

When we do finally turn it around and purify our hearts, He's going to bless us in ways that we could never imagine.

Let's take a leaf from His page. When people do us wrong, when people stab us in the back, when people criticize us, let's not try to get back at them. Let's resist the temptation to pay back our enemies in kind and not fall into that trap. Let's be like our Heavenly Father, the well-wishing friend of all living beings.

Let's thank our enemies. Let's thank our critics, because the more they talk about us, the more they bad-mouth us, the more the opportunity that we have to take the high road by not paying them back in kind. If you have that attitude, your enemies, your critics, will not be stumbling blocks, but they will be stepping stones for your destiny.

I ran across this quote last week. "What some critic thinks of me is none of my business." I'm asking you today not to have a critical spirit. Even if people are critical to you, you're not going to be a critic back. Keep your heart pure. Train yourself to see the best of everything. There is good in every situation if you'll look for it. Learn to magnify the good things.

I believe today that we can learn to wipe away the dirt from the mirror of our hearts the course of our lives will change. We'll realign ourselves with our divine Father and Well-Wisher. Let's resolve today to wipe away judgement, wipe away criticism, wipe away fault-finding. Let's make up our minds that these will no longer cloud our vision. Let's go out of here today with clean hearts, believing the best, seeing the good, minding our own business. If we do this, we're going to shake off the dust of this material world and go back home back to Godhead where life is eternal, full of bliss and knowledge.