**Transcript**

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Mouth Management – Criticizing 072124

I'm excited to be with you today. We are actually in part two in a series called Mouth Management. Last week we talked about what? Yes Wan Wan Wan – Complaining.

Announcements

Before I became a Pastor, I spent the majority of my adult life, my career working as a business analyst for an insurance company. My nickname was “eagle eye” – I was paid to find problems. The Computer programmers would write programs to change processes or implement vendors code for systems and then I would do the testing and find all the bugs before we went live. Very detail oriented and my eyes were trained to find problems. It was a great job! I loved it. I got excited when I found the problems. Really, it was an adrenaline rush – I found it! And the programmers were very happy to find it before the system went live and all the processors encountered issues. But, I found it carried over into my life outside of work. The first thing I see when I have an idea or when someone else has an idea is how it can’t work. All the reasons it won’t work or might not work rather than the reasons it can. When I look with my eyes at things and at people – unfortunately I see what is wrong. I feel terrible saying that -

Today we are going to continue talking about Mouth Management and the subject is the problem many of us have with criticizing or criticism. Let’s set the stage right off the bat with what I am not referring to. When I'm talking about criticism, I'm not talking about constructive feedback that we give because we care about people and want to help them get better. What I'm talking about is the critical nitpicking unkind, uninformed, cruel criticism that happens. It's criticism. Some of you right now, you're smiling in your seats going oh, thank you God. I just need my spouse to hear this. I'm going to send this link to my boss to watch. You're thinking about all the people that you cannot wait to hear this. I want to remind you that this message is called Mouth Management and its for your own mouth.

The problem of criticism is really difficult to see in the mirror. We hate when other people criticize us, but we often don't realize when we're criticizing other people because we feel very justified in criticizing them because if they weren't so weird, so stupid, spent their money in such a bad way, then we wouldn't criticize them, because after all, we know what's best for their life. God has a wonderful plan for your life and you know, so do I and so if you don't live up to my plan, I will criticize the way you raise your kids, the way you dress, what you post on Instagram, how you drive and where you went for your last vacation because I know you're in debt and you cannot afford that. Right?

You're quiet today. I don't know where you are. Maybe this is hitting close to home, maybe I'm the only one with this problem. I'm not sure. What I want to do is I want to show you a very popular verse in the Bible. Chances are that very few of you actually know the verse that comes after this very popular verse. Paul said this to the believers in Galatia. He said in Galations chapter 5, verse 14 and 15. He said “for the whole law can be summed up in this one command. Love your neighbor as yourself.” Most of us know that and we love it and that feels good. Love your neighbor as yourself. But then he goes on to say, but “if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out. Be aware of destroying one another. Love your neighbor as yourself, but be careful. If your words are constantly critical. If you're always cutting into people. If you're always harsh with the words, be careful of destroying one another.

What if, for some of us, our critical words are actually destroying the potential intimacy you could have in your marriage. What if your critical words are driving a wall between you and your children. What if there are those of you, your critical words are actually keeping you from sharing the goodness of Jesus because people can't get over how critical you are about anything and everything. Be careful that your words do not end up hurting those around you.

Let’s look at a couple of other verses that are contrasting versus. There's so many contrasting versus in the Bible. They'll say one thing about a subject and then they'll say something completely opposite about the very same subject. I love Proverbs 12:18. The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Here's one side of it. Some people make cutting remarks, you know how it is. My mother could say some things…

Kathy, did you lose your phone? No, why?
'Cause you haven't called me in two weeks. I could have been dead and nobody would have known. It's cutting remark, it's a burn. Some people make these harsh remarks. Here's the other side. But the words of the wise bring healing. Some people cut, hurt and criticize, but other people speak words of wisdom and those words build up, they don't tear down, they create healing.
Paul said it this way in Ephesians 4:29. He said “do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen.” He said don't let unhelpful, unwholesome, impure words come out of your mouth. Don't tear other people down. Let the only words you speak be words that are helpful for building others up according to their needs.

I don’t think we understand or have any idea how a single word of criticism can pierce someone's soul and stick with them for years and years. And on the other side, you have no idea how God can use a single word of encouragement to build someone up, to give them the faith to go on. Your words have power. Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only that which is helpful for building others up according to their needs and benefit those who listen and this.

You have no idea how much one word of criticism can take somebody down. And you have no idea, I will tell you this, I am here today because of the voice of hope from my people who continued to talk me through my own doubts and my own insecurities. You have no idea how one word of encouragement, how God can use that to build faith and hope into someone who needs it.

Our words have the power of life and they have the power of death. I want to ask you this. What kind of person do you want to be? Which type of person do you want to be? There is two options. Which do you want to be? The first type is what I'm going to call a fault finder. A fault finder. This, honestly is what most people are. Because of our sin nature, we tend to look to find what's wrong before we find what's right. Those of you who are married, be careful. Because it's so easy to be a fault finder. You can pick each other apart before you ever even get to lunch that day. I don't like the way you walk. I don't like the way you chew. I don't like the jokes you tell. I don't like the way you snore. I don't like the way you breathe. Some of you are laughing because you've had that conversation. I don't like the way you breathe.

You know you can go into the office. I don't like the way she runs her meetings. You know, this is, I don't like the way they talk. You know, we don't have any kind of real plan here. This is the stupidest place I've ever been. I can't believe the picture she posted on Instagram. She says she loves Jesus. Looks like she loves her body, but you know, I'm not judging, I'm just saying. Can you believe the way they raise their kids. I mean, if they're going to raise their kids like that, they might as well put them in prison right now because those kids don't stand a chance. And the way they drive their car. Whatever it is, it's so easy to be a fault finder.

If you're a fault finder, let me remind you, you're a lot like the Pharisees. Because this is exactly what the Pharisees did. You're not only like the Pharisees, but you're actually like the devil because one of the names of the devil, he's the deceiver, he's the devourer, he's the prince of darkness, he's the father of lies. He's also called the accuser, who accuses the people before God day in and day out. He finds fault, he finds fault. That's what Pharisees do, and that's what the devil does and the reality is is that's what a lot of us do. Why? The reason is, for a lot of us is because we are full of pride, we think we know what's best. Another reason is we're also insecure and therefore we criticize in others sometimes the very things that are weaknesses in ourselves. I can spend a whole message talking about that if we had more time. The third reason is because we just don't understand. So often we criticize from a distance things we know nothing about. You can criticize a lot about the church, even about Joy Church – the church you are committed to, give to, serve at, be a part of, a leader of.
It's a lot like before we had kids. I could criticize parents all day long for how they didn't discipline their two-year-old in the grocery store and how they could bring their kids to a nice restaurant etc etc the reason is because I'd never had my own two-year-old in a grocery store. And when you have your own two-year-old in a grocery store, you know you cannot negotiate with them. You don't know that until you have your own two-year-old. And then, all of a sudden you don't judge anybody’s parenting. You're like I know this is bad parenting, I just surrender. I give up. You can have the candy, just stop. You can have the Barbie or the Power Ranger, just get in the car, don't embarrass us.

You don't judge anybody anymore because you didn't understand. I need to tell you this right now. When you criticize others, here's a lot of times what we're thinking. We tend to think, well, this makes me look smarter. This makes me kind of look like an expert. This just shows just how good I am. No, what it does is it makes you look insecure and mean spirited, that's what it makes you look like. Ask yourself, have you ever met a critical person that you want to be like? I have never one time met a critical person that I wanted to be like. In fact, speaking of critical women.

There's a verse in the Bible about this. I'm going to show you this verse and you may criticize me for bringing up this verse, but I want you to understand, this is the word of God. When I read this verse, what I want you to do is just look forward. Don't elbow anybody. Don't let your heart rate go up. Don't you dare nod. Don't say amen. Just keep your breathing normal and just let God do what he wants to do. This is not your place. This is all in the hands of God. Some of you are getting mad, I'm so sorry.

Get ready. Proverbs 21:19 says it's better to live alone in the desert than with a quarrelsome, complaining wife. May God add his blessings to the reading of his word. There's not a verse about men, but if I ever get to add a verse to the Bible, it'll be first Kathy 5:12. It'll say something like it's better to poop out something the size of a watermelon than to live with a man who constantly picks you apart. This goes both ways.

I've never met a critical person I wanted to be like or to be around. So, I want to ask you, those of you who like me have battled with a very critical spirit that's so difficult to see in the mirror, because we justify what we do because we feel like we actually have the right to pick other people apart. Do you want to be a fault finder or do you want to be what I call a hope dealer. Hope with an H. This is what scripture says. Romans 15:13. Do you want to be a hope dealer. Paul says this, listen to the hope, listen to the hope, listen to the hope. He says “may the God of hope fill you all with joy and peace as you trust in him. Why? So that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul was a chief hope dealer. Any time he'd speak, any time he'd write, he wasn't going to tear people down, he was going to build them up. He wasn't going to let any unwholesome talk come out of his mouth but only that which is helpful for building life into other people. Romans chapter 8, I want you to listen to the words of hope that Paul said. I just picked some high parts out of one chapter. He starts it and he says this. Listen to the hope. “Now therefore, there is no condemnation for those of you who are in Christ Jesus.” He said the Holy Spirit, he helps you in your weakness. He said Jesus is making intercession at the right hand of God the Father right now. That gives me hope. He said that you are more than a conqueror through Christ Jesus. That gives me hope. He said neither death nor life, neither demons nor angels, neither powers of the present or the future, neither height nor depth, neither anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Do you want to be a fault finder or do you want to be a hope dealer? The Pharisees were fault finders, the devil is a fault finder. Jesus is full of hope. I love the different metaphors of Jesus. He is the bread of life, he is the living water, he is the good shepherd, he is the door, he is the living vine, he is the gate, he is the King of Kings, he is the Lord of Lords, he is the alpha and the omega. Let me tell you who else he is. 1 Timothy calls Jesus this. He calls Jesus our hope. Titus 2 calls Jesus the blessed hope. 1 Peter calls Jesus the living hope. Whenever someone would sin, the Pharisees would point out the sin and accuse. Jesus would come, he'd call sin what it was, but then he would offer hope to walk away from the bondages of sin. When there was a woman caught in adultery, what did the Pharisees do? The Pharisees said, stone her. The law says put her to death and that was exactly what the law said, but the Pharisees pointed out everything that was wrong. Jesus instead knelt down in the sand and started writing something. We're not sure what he was writing. Many scholars believe and I tend to agree, he most likely was writing something like the sins of the Pharisee men, because one by one from the oldest to the youngest, they all just started walking away. Walked away. Jesus knelt down in the sand to this woman who was broken and full of shame and said to her, woman, sweetheart, where are the fault finders? Where are the accusers? Where are those who tried to condemn you. And she looked up and said they're all gone. And so Jesus said, neither do I condemn you, don't do this anymore, there's a better way. He said go your way and don't sin anymore, but you can find forgiveness, you can find life, you can find real love. What do you want to be? Do you want to be a fault finder? That's what the Pharisees were. That's what our spiritual enemy is. The prince of darkness, the father of lies, the great deceiver, the accuser of the brothers. Who is Jesus? He is the way, he is the truth, he is the living hope. He is the blessed hope. He is our hope. I want to be a hope dealer.

I want to tell you a story - its not my story but it is so powerful and emotional.

There was a family and the Dad was a Pastor. They had 6 of their own children and so each of their kids had a lot of friends over. And there was one particular kid that was in a really bad spot. His dad was everything you would never want a dad to be. And he was absent and this kid picked up more unhealthy thought patterns than you could imagine for a 12-year-old and so this Pastor and wife would take him in and spend some time with him, have him on the weekends and take him to church and do the best they could to speak life into him. People warned them, they said you need to understand, he will steal from you, he will lie. If his lips are moving, he's probably lying. He'll talk back to you, he'll run from you, he'll hit, he said, this kid is bad news. 12-year-old kid, I'll call him Jonathan to respect his privacy and so I said fair enough, we're ready for him. Well, when the Pastor met Jonathan, he said he would never forget how God directed him to respond.

He said, I reached out and I said young man, my name is Pastor Joe and I am honored to meet you. And he shook my hand and I said oh, man, that was the most firm handshake I've gotten all week. That's the way a man shakes a hand. You must be a young man. Are you a young man? The boy said uh, yeah. Pastor Joe said no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Young men, they say yes, sir. I said that was a handshake of a man if I've ever felt one. Are you a young man? He went yes, sir, I am. I said aw, man, you looked me in the eye when you said that. You're like crazy polite. You're not only just a young man, but you're strong and you're polite. Pastor Joe continued and said wait a minute, do you know I'm a pastor. The boy said, yeah, I do. Pastors have weird spiritual gifts. I'm sensing something in you. I sense greatness inside of you. Have you ever had anyone tell you that there's greatness in you? He looked up at Pastor Joe, he said no. I said great young men say no, sir. Have you ever had anyone tell you? He said, no sir, no sir. So you need to understand, I sense greatness in you. It's all over you. I bet you love to go to church, don't you? He said, yeah, I do. I said I bet you're polite. Yes, I am. I bet you like to take the dishes over to the sink after dinner……, Pastor Joe just said this, and all kinds of stuff, speaking life into him. And he said he never had a politer, better behaved kid working his tail off to live up to someone who believed that there was greatness inside of him. Years later, this kid, you wouldn't believe who he's grown into be and he calls Pastor Joe his spiritual dad. Very little time. The window of time they spent with him was so short, it would stun you and he points back and says that was the season that God completely changed his life.

We have no idea. You have no idea when you criticize your spouse what it does to their self-esteem and your intimacy. You have no idea when you're hard on your kids how it belittles them and distances you from them. You have no idea how foolish you look when you criticize and criticize and criticize, thinking it makes you look better. It makes you look insecure and mean spirited. And you have no idea how one word of encouragement, how God can use that to change a life. You have no idea when you speak the best about others how God can build them up. Mike and I try to tell people to believe the best – it starts with believing the best in people and then speaking it. Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only that which is helpful for building others up according to their needs.

So your kid may not be the neatest kid, but he's got a great heart. Tell him, you're amazing, I love what I see in you, I love the way you speak about others. Build them up. Your roommate may eat your food and wear your clothes. That's what girls do when they're roommates. But she's a great friend, tell her you're the most loyal faithful friend. I couldn't image a better roommate. Your wife may not be the most organized, but she's an incredible mom. Instead of picking her apart for what she's not, build her up for what she is. I love the way you love our kids. I could have never married anyone that would impart more life into our children.

Your husband may not ever win yard of the month, he doesn't like to mow the yard, looks kind of bad. Next time he does, just say you so sexy out there in your black tall socks pushing that lawnmower. I love what I see. Words of life, words of life, words of life, words of life, you have no idea how God can use your words to build someone up. I am very passionate about this and at the same time not great at it. But I am learning. I had the most critical spirit and not because I had ill intentions. The closer I have gotten to God, though, the more aware I have become of my sinfulness. And the more aware I became of my sinfulness, the more I became aware of the magnitude of God's grace and because of who he is and what he's done for me, I don’t want to waste time criticizing the speck in someone else's eye when I've had a log stuck in my eye. Because of who God is, because of what he's done, because of how he's forgiven me, because of how he's given me hope, because of how he has loved a person who didn't deserve that love, I commit to not tear down. I will build up.

We are people of God. We are hope dealers. We point people to Jesus, the living hope. We point people to Jesus, the King of Kings. We point people to Jesus, the one who forgives brokenness and heals all infirmities. We point people to Jesus, our Savior, our King, our Lord. We point people to hope. We are not fault finders. Anybody can be a fault finder. Pharisees are fault finders. The devil is a fault finder. We are followers of Jesus. We speak words of healing, we speak words of life. You have no idea, no idea, how a single critical word can pierce, kill and destroy.

You have no idea how God can use a single word of encouragement to push you forward, to build your faith and to transform you even more into the image of Christ. So, what do you want to be? I want to lead a church full of hope dealers, pointing people to the one who is our living hope, our Savior, our King, our Lord Jesus.

Father, we ask that you would do a very healing and even a convicting work in our hearts and God I just confess that I've been one who has had a critical spirit. God helps us all become aware of our need and the grossness of our own sin and the magnitude, God, of your grace, that we wouldn't even have time to point out the faults in others, but we would offer words of hope and words of healing. As you reflect today in prayer, those of you who would say, yeah, I can be a little more critical, I can be harsh, I can tear people down. It may be in my marriage, it may be with my kids, it may be with people I work with, it may be at school. It may just be in society and politics and online, I can be a critical person. God, help me not to be a fault finder, but a hope dealer. Lift up your hands right now, I hope it's everybody. Lift up your hands high. Father I pray that with hands lifted toward our eternal hope, God, that you would work on our hearts, God that you would help us see the power of our words. They have power of life and death. God, may we be life givers, not life takers. God, every time we want to just criticize, point something out that's wrong, God I pray that we would remember all that's wrong with us and not waste a breath on tearing somebody else down, but God you would use our words, use our heart, use our spirit to build others up and most importantly, to point them toward you. God, while so many will make cutting remarks, empower us to say wise words that bring healing. We pray, oh, God that there would be no unwholesome talk that comes out of our mouth, but only that which is helpful for building others up according to their needs. God, make us hope dealers. Everywhere we go, God, when we walk into the room, hope walks into the room. God, we come to a party, hope just came to the party. God, wherever we are. Help us to represent the living hope of your son Jesus.

As you keep praying today. There are those of you, you may have been listening to the words of the chief fault finder, your spiritual enemy. What's so interesting about the devil is before you do something wrong, Satan's going to say, hey, it doesn't matter. Do whatever you want. No one's going to care. Afterwards you do something wrong, it's like God could never love you. You're pathetic, after what you did. You're ruining, you'll never be used. That's how he lies to us. He's the chief fault finder. You're not good enough for God. You've gone too far. After what you've done, God couldn't love you. Let me tell you who God is. He sent Jesus, our ultimate hope dealer, Jesus was perfect in every way. He said I have come that people may have life. I have become that they may have life to the full. Jesus went to the cross for us. The sinless son of God. He died in our place, rose again for the forgiveness of sins, so that anyone, and this includes you, anyone, no matter what you've done, no matter how dark your life feels, anyone who calls on the name of the Lord would be saved, forgiven, made completely new and all of our churches right now, you are here today because you need to experience the living hope. You are dead in your sins, but you are one prayer away from experiencing true life. At all of our churches, those that say yes, I need his grace, yes, I need his forgiveness. Yes, I turn my life over to Jesus. Hope is in the house. Hope is in the house. Everybody pray aloud. Pray heavenly Father, I give you my life, forgive me of all my sins. Make be brand new. Fill me with your spirit so I could follow Jesus, so I could become like him. My life is not my own. Today I give it to you. Thank you for new life. Thank you for hope. Help me to be a hope dealer, spreading the love of Jesus to everyone I meet. It's in his name that I pray and everybody say loud, amen, amen, amen.