

A Trumpeter's Fate

A trumpeter in the armed forces was once captured by the enemy. He pleaded with his captors: "Please spare me! I have no gun. I am not guilty of any crime. I have not killed a single one of your soldiers. I only carry this poor brass trumpet and play it when I'm told to."

"That is the very reason for putting you to death," his captors said. "For, while you do not fight yourself, your trumpet stirs up all the others to battle. It causes many others to kill."

So it is with our criticism of others. We may not hate, mistrust or avoid the person we criticize, but our criticism can cause others to manifest those feelings and behaviors.

There once was a woman to whom gossip and criticism were so utterly distasteful that whenever a visitor brought up something negative about a person, she would say, "Come, let's go and ask if this is true." The talebearer was always so taken aback that he or she would beg to be excused. But the determined woman would insist on escorting the reluctant soul to the subject of the tale to verify its truth or to hear the other point of view. After awhile, no one repeated a tale or voiced a criticism in her presence.

It is incumbent upon us to build up our friends, not tear them down. Another way of putting it: We should pick our friends, but not to pieces.

--Beecher Hunter