

When Criticism Comes ...

One of the most influential church leaders and Christian teachers in China during the 20th century was Watchman Nee.

Before his conversion, one evening in 1920 he was alone in his room, struggling to decide whether or not to believe in the Lord. "As I visualized the Lord's hands stretched out on the cross, they seemed to be welcoming me and the Lord was saying, 'I am waiting to receive you.' Realizing the effectiveness of Christ's blood in cleansing my sins and being overwhelmed by such love, I accepted Him there. Previously I had laughed at people who had accepted Jesus, but that evening the experience became real for me and I wept and confessed my sins, seeking the Lord's forgiveness. As I made my first prayer, I knew joy and peace such as I had never known before."



In 1922, he initiated church meetings in Fuzhou that may be considered the beginning of the local churches. During his 30 years of ministry, Nee published many books expounding the Bible and established churches throughout China.

Following the Communist Revolution, Nee was persecuted and imprisoned for his faith and spent the last 20 years of his life in prison.

During his lifetime, he was roundly criticized by the government. Smear campaigns were employed to discredit him, but he never responded to critics and never defended himself. Asked about it, he said, "Brothers, if people trust us, there is no need to explain; and if they don't trust us, there is no use in explaining."

The Apostle Paul said about his critics: "It matters very little to me what you think of me, even less where I rank in popular opinion. I don't even rank myself ... The Master makes that judgment" (1 Corinthians 4:3-4 MSG).

How do we respond to unfair criticism and unkind words? Our natural reaction is to feel indignant and defensive, to try to straighten everyone out. But we need thick skin, soft hearts and an absolute trust in the Lord to give us favor in the sight of God and man as He chooses.

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There may be times to defend ourselves or offer an explanation, but we must guard against taking criticism too seriously. We're responsible for our character, but we can leave our reputation in God's hands.

Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else (Galatians 6:4 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter