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## **THE STAND** **CRITICISM**

We love to go at each other, we human beings do. As our world gets more sophisticated and all of us become more verbal, we invariably become more confrontational. Confrontation for the caveman of old simply meant beating the tar physically out of an enemy. There are still plenty of cavemen today, macho men who settle things with their fists, with violence, with criminal conduct. But the vast majority of human beings today go at each other verbally.

It seems as though we are more critical than ever. We don't debate anymore. We simply argue, and we argue to win. Very seldom does another point of view prevail, and no one listens to a differing point of view. It is my way or the highway. You are wrong. I am right. End of the matter.

Negativity rules. Feelings get hurt, sensitivities turn raw and the soul is pierced. We react like the caveman of old as though a dinosaur were attacking. Only today, the attacks are wars of words. He who has the best vocabulary wins. Trump the enemy with satire, sarcasm, strong argumentation, even clichés and sayings and you win. And, the louder you talk, the angrier you sound and look, the better the victory.

I have a New Year's proposal for all of us who are critical or tend to be more than we should. How nice it would be if we could make a New Year's resolution to change, water that with prayer, vow before the Lord and change overnight. No way for that for us mired in the weaknesses of the flesh. So, how about this.

First, be highly sensitive to or try to eliminate any and all negative vocabulary. Make yourself conscious every time you say no, not or any other negative word. Make certain there is real reason for doing so, rather than simply protecting one's ego, one's psychological turf.

Every time you think, criticize or say anything negative, require yourself to immediately follow with something positive. If, for example, you criticize a person, whether rightly so or not, find one good thing to say about that person, however small in return. If God made that person, and he did, then there must be some good somewhere. Find it and put it into words. Even Hitler had affection for Eva Braun.

Ignore the negative and the critical. Require yourself as a positive human being not to take up the cudgel. Cudgel in hand (or mouth), you lose. Any victory you may seemingly get is pyrrhic at best. When someone lays down the negative verbal gauntlet, and you take the bait, you lose. You think and speak at their level and that stuff never gets out of the gutter. **IGNORE THEM AND THEIR WORDS.** On trial for His life, Jesus said nothing in the face of some of the most hateful human language of all time.

Come up with a better idea. Anybody can criticize anything if it even appears to be wrong or not working. That takes no brains, or guts for that matter. If it's not working, fix it. Come up with an idea that will make things better, that will work. Better ideas rule. The world hungers for them. If you don't have any, ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.

Come up with your own original ideas. Instead of criticizing a person bad to the core, show that person how he can be better, even change. Nice time to witness, is it not? Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the greater. An original idea, something a combatant never thought of, is gold. There are better ideas out there, and then there are your own original ideas. They may very well be the best of the better. When you're working with better ideas and your ideas, you are far beyond the negative, the critical, long out of the gutter of negativity. You are on the high road, the positive road, the way to reconciliation and bridge building.

Where there is hate, love. Love, we Christians should believe, is sufficient unto death, even greater than death as our Lord showed us. In the face of negativity, love. In the face of criticism, love. In the face of anger and hate, LOVE. The more love the better for the New Year. The more of HIS love, the best of all.

May your New Year be filled with the positive, with courage and with creative ideas. And, most importantly, with love.