

## To Pluck or Not to Pluck? (not eye brows)

Mt. 12:1-14; Mk. 2:23-3:6; Luke 6:1-11 [John 5:9-18]

It is impossible to avoid criticism. Someone has said, “To avoid criticism, don’t *say* anything; don’t *do* anything; and don’t *be* anything.” Actually, even then you will be criticized, because if you don’t do anything, you be criticized for *not* doing anything!

Jesus was constantly criticized (and still is). Most of the criticisms came from the religious leaders—The Pharisees. He was criticized for healing on the Sabbath... eating with publicans and sinners... and claiming equality with God. Of course, none of these criticisms were justified.

How did Jesus handle criticism? Let’s learn how to deal with criticism from this example from Jesus’ life.

### I. The APPETITE of the disciples (Mt. 12:1).

A. The CORN. Critics of the Bible say corn was unknown until Columbus brought it from America.

1. The word “*corn*” comes from the word “*kern*.” It can refer to any kernel of grain (John 12:24).

2. However, “*corn*” (maize) has been found sealed in pottery in Egyptian tombs. In 2008, an archaeologist named Gunnar Thompson published his findings that “Indian corn” [maize] was well documented in Egyptian temples, tombs, and scrolls 3,000 years before Columbus, and the farming of corn spread throughout the Mediterranean area (*Ancient Egyptian Maize*, 2010).<sup>1</sup>

3. It doesn’t make any difference if the disciples were eating corn/maize, or kernels of wheat. The point is, they were hungry, and corn was available, so they plucked and ate.



<sup>1</sup> D. P. R., *The Book of Luke*, BB B, P, FL, 2013, .198.

B. The CONDUCT. Plucking of corn was permitted in the law (Dt. 23:25). However, the Pharisees construed it as harvesting.

## II. The ACCUSATION of the legalists (Mt. 12:2).

➤ There are those who are always looking to find fault. [Satan is the accuser of the brethren.] The Pharisees were always looking for any one who committed the slightest infraction of *their* rules.

➤ If the Pharisees were as focused on man's needs as on seeing their faults, they could have given the disciples some food without having to pluck corn!

A. The accusation was MISDIRECTED.

- If someone is doing something wrong, they should be approached directly. The Pharisees were using the disciples as a means to attack Christ. The same thing happens today—If a Christian falls into sin that brings reproach on Jesus Himself.

B. The accusation was UNFOUNDED.

- “Behold, thy disciples do that which is **not lawful** to do upon the sabbath day.” Not lawful according to who??? It is only unlawful because of the man-made rules of the religious leaders. The rabbis took the commandment of the sabbath, “*thou shalt not do any work,*” and defined what constituted “work.” To walk more than 2,000 cubits (½ mile) was considered “work.” To lift anything heavier than a dried fig was “work.” Jesus called these petty rules “*heavy burdens*” (Mt. 23:4) and “*the commandments of men*” (Mt. 15:9).

C. The accusation was HYPOCRITICAL.

1. What were the Pharisees doing in the field anyway? They broke one of their own rules by being more than 2000 cubits away from their own homes on the sabbath. They would go out of their way to find fault with others, and err themselves. Hypocrites!
2. **Hypocrisy** (vs.11-12). These hypocrites would rescue their livestock from trouble on the sabbath, but forbid helping of another human being in need. If their neighbor's house

caught fire on the sabbath, they would stand by and watch, rather than help put the fire out.

### III. The ANSWER of the Savior (Mt. 12:3-7).

➤ Christ defended the disciples by giving four reasons why the disciples were guiltless in their conduct.

#### A. The PRECEDENT in Scriptures. *"Have ye not read..."*

- This is one of Christ's favorite expressions when dealing with religious hypocrites. Jesus asked this question on six different occasions. A good question for all of us!
  - Jesus did not argue with them. He simply turned to the Scriptures to answer His critics! Most problems come from not reading the Scriptures!
1. PROVISIONS for David's hunger (vs. 3-4 cf. 1 Sam. 21:1-6). If it was OK for David (type of Christ) and his men to eat the holy bread from the sacred table in the tabernacle, then it was also OK for Jesus, the *"Son of David,"* to allow His men to eat corn from His fields.
  2. PRIESTS work in the temple (vs. 5-6). A lot of hard work was done by the priests in the Temple on the sabbath (cf. Num. 28:9-10; 29:32). The priest had to cut wood, prepare and kill the animals for the burnt offering, etc. Yet, tasks involved in serving God during the sabbath was permitted.

B. The PREEMINENCE of Christ (v. 6—*"That in this place is one greater than the temple."*). It is the Lord's presence that makes a place holy. Apart from God's presence, a place is just like any other place.

C. The PRIORITY of compassion (v. 7—*"I will have mercy, and not sacrifice."* cf. Hosea 6:6; Mt. 9:13).

1. They were so concerned about obeying their petty rules they missed the more important thing—showing mercy! God puts a higher premium on showing MERCY than making sacrifice!

2. **God is not a legalist**—Legalists are seldom compassionate.

baby! Jesus said people are more valuable than birds (Mt. 10:29-31).

- Some people spend more money pampering their pet animals than they spend to support missionaries who are seeking to win the souls of men to Christ!

**SUMMATION:** Why didn't Jesus wait and come back the next day to heal the man's withered hand? To teach us these valuable lessons:

- **The best way to handle criticism is with the Scriptures.** *"Have ye not read..."* Are you reading your Bible so you can answer critics?
- **He is the Lord of the Sabbath**—He gave it, and He can do what He wants with it. Is He the Lord of YOU?
- **People are more important than man-made rules.** Any legalistic "rule" that takes precedent over caring for the souls of men needs to be set aside. How important are the souls of men to you?
- **Showing mercy is a priority.** Instead of condemning people, how about showing them some love and mercy, like God showed to you?

➡ Brian Wilson's signature song is *"Love and Mercy."* It is also the title of the movie about Brian's life. In this song, Brian sings:

I was sittin' in a crummy movie with my hands on my chin  
Oh the violence that occurs seems like we'll never win.

CHORUS: **Love and mercy** is what you need tonight.  
So, **love and mercy** to you and your friends tonight.

I was lyin' in my room and the news came on T.V.  
A lotta people out there hurtin' and it really scares me

CHORUS: **Love and mercy** is what you need tonight.  
So, **love and mercy** to you and your friends tonight.

Amen, Brian—Love and mercy is what we need. And here is where you can find it:

*"Near the cross, a trembling soul, LOVE AND MERCY found me. There the Bright and Morning Star, sheds its beams around me."*

*"MY REDEEMER"— "I will tell the wondrous story, How my lost estate to save, In His boundless LOVE AND MERCY, He the ransom freely gave!"*