

"**Criticism**" GK- *kritikos* = "able to discern or skilled in judging."

- **Criticism has two different meanings:**

- Speaking **fairly** with discernment in regard to merit or value
- Speaking **unfairly** with trivial or harsh judgments- unfair criticism by faultfinding

The Bible stresses the powerful impact of our right and wrong words. ...

"The tongue has the power of life and death. ..." -Proverbs 18:21

What Is the Cycle of Criticism?

Job has had enough ... and hopes to quiet his "friends-turned-accusers" once and for all. *"You, however, smear me with lies; you are worthless physicians, all of you! If only you would be altogether silent! For you, that would be wisdom"* (**Job 13:4-5**). **But the cycle of criticism continues** ... all three accusers keep up the **verbal pounding**, which prompts this battered man to plead before his God ...

"Only grant me these two things, God, and then I will not hide from you: Withdraw your hand far from me, and stop frightening me with your terrors." (**Job 13:20-21**)

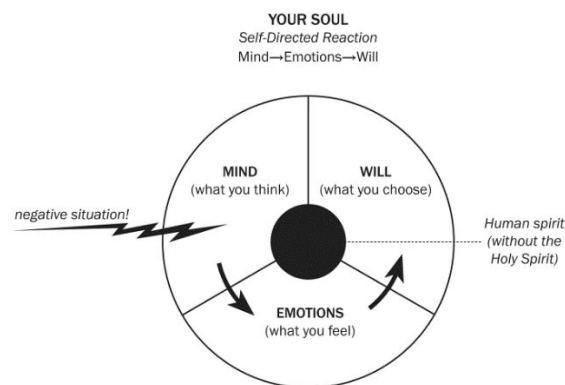
The **painful situations** we experience are **processed by our soul** — our **mind, will, / emotions**. Over **time**, we can **develop** a **negative pattern** of reacting to these **painful situations** (becoming critical), a **pattern** that can **remain** with us into and **throughout** our **life**. We **must rely** on the **transforming work** of the **Holy Spirit** within us to help us **overcome** a critical spirit.

When you are **trapped in a cycle** of critical thinking you may exclaim, **"I can't help reacting this way!"** Yet your **emotions** are merely **responding** to what your **mind thinks**. Therefore, the **cycle** is this: Your negative **thoughts produce** your negative **emotions**, which, in turn, **produce** your negative **actions**.

Since the **cycle of criticism** begins in our **thoughts**, we need to heed what the Bible tells us about **renewing our minds** and **appropriate the mind of Christ**. With **God's help** we can **change** our **thoughts** and then **experience** a changed **life**. Scripture says it this way ...

"Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. ... Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (**1 Cor 2:16; Romans 12:2**)

Whenever a negative situation occurs in your life, you have a choice as to how you think about it — which determines how you respond. The natural progression occurs as follows:



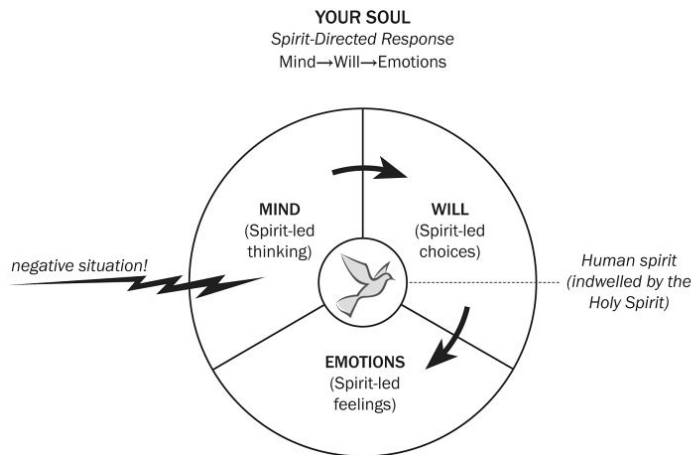
Negative Situation: Someone verbally cuts you down.

Natural Human Response

- **Your Mind** records the **cruel words** and **thinks angry thoughts**. ("He's so hateful.") Many **develop** a critical spirit **because** of the way they **process** the **pain** in their lives, and this **process** is **naturally influenced** by the ways the **significant** people in their lives have **processed their own pain**.
- **Your Emotions** respond with **angry feelings**. ("I hate him.") **If Not Careful-** You **base** their **decisions** more on **emotions** than on **reasoning**..
- **Your Will** reacts with **angry behavior**. (You act in hateful ways.)

Responding in kind with nasty, verbal attacks or angry, argumentative shouting is a natural human response that follows angry thoughts and angry feelings. This type of **response** only **continues** cycles of **behavior** that **destroy** rather than **give** life. **As Paul described ...**

"Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires. ... The mind governed by the flesh is death. ..." (**Romans 8:5-6**)



Negative Situation: Someone verbally cuts you down.

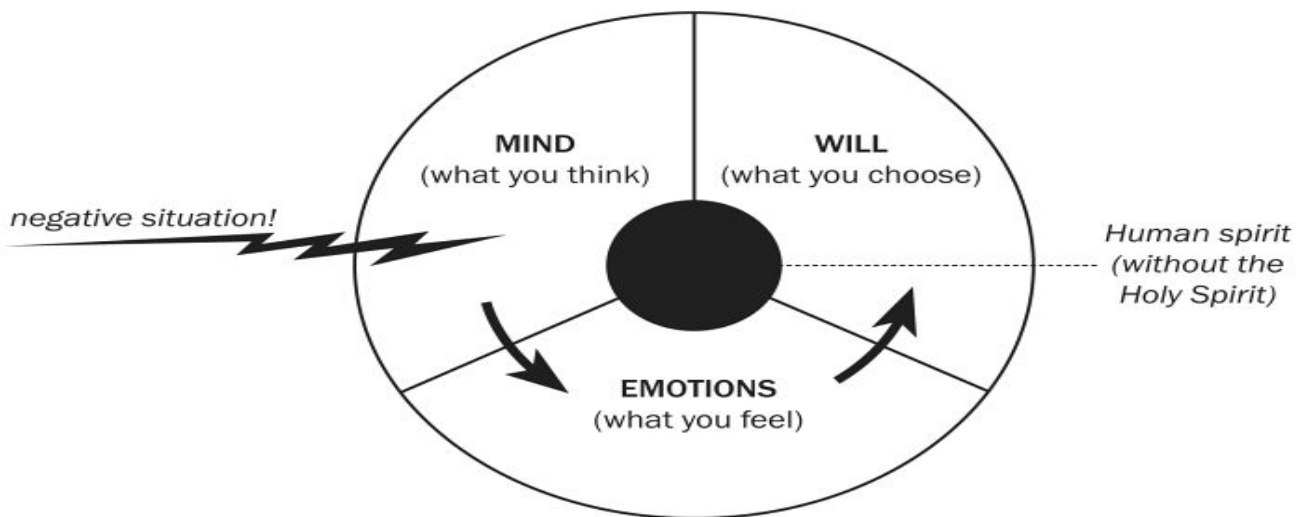
Spirit-Led Response

- **Your Mind** records the **unjust words**, the **Holy Spirit**, as your **Counselor**, *teaches your mind how to think* about the offense.
"The Counselor, the Holy Spirit — the Father will send Him in My name — will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you" (**John 14:26 HCSB**).
"His words were so hateful. But there must be something painfully broken in his life. I will do what the Bible tells me to do — I need to '...pray for those who persecute [me].'" (**Matthew 5:44**)
- **Your Will** acts with **prayer** as the **Spirit directs your will** toward the **right choice**. As your **Conscience**, He **convicts** you to pray, whether you **feel like it or not**.
"When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (**John 16:13**).
"Lord, I pray that (name of critic) will allow You to meet the need for healing whatever past pain is still causing (name of critic) problems."
- **Your Emotions** respond with **compassion** as the **Spirit controls your emotions**.
"Hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (**Romans 5:5**).

As you pray, the Comforter evokes from you loving compassion toward the unjust person who is spiritually needy. ...

"... those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires ... the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace." (**Romans 8:5-6**)

YOUR SOUL
Self-Directed Reaction
Mind→Emotions→Will



YOUR SOUL
Spirit-Directed Response
Mind→Will→Emotions

