

Eleven Things to Do When You Are Criticized

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When you are criticized, your first response is probably either to fight or to flee. Don't do either one. Instead...

1. Expect criticism.
2. Listen to it without defensiveness; take a breath, receive it. Think about it.
3. Be grateful for it. Thank the critic. Thank God. "Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov 27:5-6). "Let a righteous man strike me--it is a kindness; let him rebuke me--it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it" (Psa 141:5).
4. Say, "I'll give that some serious consideration."
5. Look to Jesus; believe the gospel. "If anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 Jn 2:1). Don't let criticism devastate you. You must protect your own heart from damage. No one is perfect. We are all broken jars of clay. Criticism doesn't mean the end of the world. Don't allow the criticism to rob you of your joy and sense of purpose. Just because you've been criticized doesn't mean you are not a person dearly loved by God and gifted for ministry. Ministry is not about getting everything right; it's about loving the people to the best of your ability, and you will always fall short.
6. Believe that some of the criticism is warranted. You aren't as good as you think. There are areas of imperfection in your life. You have blind spots. Even if the critic is only 5% right, that's something that you need to work on.
7. Don't believe all of it. Consider the source. Often, the critic is hurting or angry about something else, and criticizing you is his or her coping mechanism.
8. Run it by someone else who knows and loves you.
9. Pray about it.
10. After some time, respond to the critic in person or via email. If it's appropriate, speak up in your own defense.
11. Make appropriate changes.

Remember what Teddy Roosevelt said: "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."