

My Big Fat Mouth Part 3 *Criticism*

Message to Conversation Guide

Key Passage

2 Kings 6:1-7

6 The company of the prophets said to Elisha, "Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. 2 Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to live."

And he said, "Go."

3 Then one of them said, "Won't you please come with your servants?"

"I will," Elisha replied. 4 And he went with them.

They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees. 5 As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axhead fell into the water. **"Oh, my lord," he cried out, "it was borrowed!"**

6 The man of God asked, **"Where did it fall?"** When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float. 7 "Lift it out," he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it. NIV

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the definitions of criticism listed below.
 - *The expression of disapproval of someone or something based on perceived faults or mistakes.*
 - *The act of passing judgment as to the merits of anything.*
 - *The act of passing severe judgment; censure; faultfinding.*
2. What would be your definition of criticism?
3. Discuss how criticism focuses on a person's failure and coaching or mentoring focuses on solving problems and developing an individual's potential.
4. In the story of Elisha and the axehead the man that lost the axehead felt bad and full of shame about what had happened ("Oh, my lord, 'he cried out, it was borrowed!"). Discuss how, in most cases, people already feel bad about their failures and there is no benefit in trying to make them feel worse.

5. Are you more motivated by criticism or encouragement?
6. Discuss the difference between criticism that is destructive and criticism that is productive.
 - *Destructive Criticism is aimed at the person while Productive Criticism is aimed at the action that needs to be corrected.*
 - *Destructive Criticism offers no hope while Productive Criticism is focused on solutions that can improve individual performance.*
 - *Destructive Criticism is spoken with a harsh tone while Productive Criticism is spoken with concern and compassion.*
 - *Destructive Criticism wounds the spirit of the person criticized while Productive Criticism builds up the spirit of the one being challenged.*
 - *Destructive Criticism is focused only on the negative while Productive criticism is a blend of positive affirmation and pertinent challenges.*
7. In order to offer productive criticism to someone we must first earn the right to do so. Discuss the principle that encouragement and affirmation are always the precursors to productive criticism. Examine and discuss the principle below.
 - *Praise and Affirmation always pave the way for productive criticism.*
8. How do the words of Jesus to the church of Ephesus in the book of Revelation listed below illustrate the principle of praise preceding productive criticism? What is the sandwich principle that is illustrated in the passage below?

Rev 2:1-7

2 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

*These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lamp stands: 2 I know your deeds, **your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.***

4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. 5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place. 6 But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. NIV

