

**Critical People**

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"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35

**Building up or Tearing down?**

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Matthew 7:1-2

**How do you respond to critical people?**

- 1) **Most of the time, you don't respond.** (1 Peter 2:21-23; Proverbs 19:11)  
When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to [God] who judges justly. 1 Pt 2:23
  - **Rather than getting stuck, trust God and rise above it.**
- 2) **Sometimes, you respond carefully.** (Judges 8:1-3)  
...When the men of Ephraim heard Gideon's answer, their anger subsided. Judges 8:3 NLT
  - **Choose a Spirit-led response over an emotion-led reaction.**
- 3) **Occasionally, you listen and grow from it.** (Proverbs 15:31-32)  
If you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise. Pr 15:31
  - **Crave helpful feedback, and have the courage to give it.**

**Could it be me?** (Matthew 7:3-5; Romans 14:10, 12-13 NLT)

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Matthew 7:3-5

- **Yank the plank.**
- **Re-train yourself.**
- **Speak life.**

**Let's Connect**

- What is the most ridiculous criticism you've received?

**Let's Talk About It**

We all have *difficult people* in our lives. Some of them are critical people who spend a lot of time and energy tearing down others, instead of building them up. While we should embrace constructive criticism because it is invaluable to help us grow, we need wisdom to know when or how to respond to criticism. We also need God's grace and humility to help overcome our own critical nature.

John 13:34-35; Matthew 7:1-5; 1 Peter 2:21-23; Proverbs 19:11; Judges 8:1-3; Proverbs 15:31-32; Romans 14:10-13; James 2:12-13

- Which part of the message impacted and challenged you?
- Read 1 Peter 2:21-23. What is your take-away from this Scripture?
- Read Matthew 7:1-5. What types of criticism are you currently receiving? How is some of the criticism you're receiving building you up and helping you to grow? How will you deal with unjust criticism you are currently getting from others?
- Why do you think we so often put other people's opinions of us ahead of God's opinion of us? What steps will you take to put God's opinion of you ahead of other people's opinions?
- Read Romans 14:10-13. What will you do to overcome your own critical nature so you can build up rather than tear down? What insecurities and/or areas of pride might be fueling your critical nature?

**Take a Step**

- Identify any criticism you've accepted that stands against God's work in your life. Take steps to replace those critical words with words of truth.
- Apologize to anyone you've been overly critical of. Ask someone you trust to help you know when you're being too critical.

**Here's My Prayer**

- God, You are full of grace and mercy, quick to love and slow to judge. Jesus, thank You for all You have done to replace cutting words with words of life. We ask You to set us free from words that bring death. Lead us to love others with Your love and to speak life-giving words that bring healing. In Jesus' name, amen.