

**Criticizing**

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**Our words have the potential to impact the direction and quality of the lives of others.**

Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing.  
Proverbs 12:18 NLT

For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another. Galatians 5:14-15

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ... 17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. Ephesians 4:1-3, 17

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:29-30

**Which do you want to be?**

- **A fault finder**
- **A hope builder**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

**Connect**

Talk about a time you were criticized. How did it feel?

**Word and Reflection**

Our words have the power to influence the direction and quality of our lives as well as the lives of others. We have a choice as to how we will use our words. We can be a fault finder or a hope builder. Our words can tear others down or build others up. As followers of Christ, our words should be used to bring hope and healing to those around us.

Proverbs 12:18, Galatians 5:14-15; Ephesians 4:1-3, 17-19, 29-30; Romans 15:13

- Which part of the message made an impact, caught your attention or challenged you?
- On a typical day, are you more of a fault-finder or a hope-builder?
- Read Proverbs 12:18. Who are you most critical of? What could your criticism be destroying? Why do you think it seems easier to criticize than to build up?
- Read Ephesians 4:1-3, 29. What are these verses teaching us to do? What will you do to start becoming more of a hope builder and less critical of yourself and others?
- Read Romans 15:13. Who can you begin building up with hope? What would it look like if each day your words overflowed with hope from the Holy Spirit?

**Action**

- Take the challenge: Declare a critical-free week. Instead, find ways to build hope in others.

**Prayer**

- Ask God to convict your heart when you are tempted to criticize. Pray that God will help you become a better hope builder and less of a fault finder.
- Pray for the people in your Grace Group and those you're reaching out to.