

# HOW TO GIVE AND RECEIVE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

## Introduction

- A. "First behold the beam in *your* eye..." Matt 7:1-5
- B. However, one is not to deal with oneself alone.
  - 1. "Faithful are the *wounds* of a friend." Prov 27:6
  - 2. "*Admonish* one another." Rom 15:14
  - 3. "*Silence may be golden but sometimes it is just plain yellow!*"
  - 4. The old adage, "If you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything at all," is not true. Sometimes it takes courage to warn or to instruct a person so s/he is built up spiritually. It may be what is sorely needed.

## I. BIBLICAL INSTRUCTIONS

- A. Prov 12:1 "He that *hates reproof* is **stupid!**"
- B. Prov 12:15 "He that *hearketh unto counsel* is wise."
- C. Prov 3:11 "Don't *refuse criticism*."
- D. Prov 13:18 "If you refuse criticism, you will end in *disgrace*."
- E. Prov 25:12 "He wears a badge of honor who *accepts reproof*."
- F. Eph 4:15 "Speak the *truth in love*."

**ALL OF US ARE IMPERFECT & NEED HELP!  
THIS IS TRUE OF EVERY RELATIONSHIP.**

We all have room to grow!

- 1. Husbands & wives, parents & children, etc. need help from one another.  
We tend to shun it, but we need it!
- 2. Have you ever tried to proofread your own work?
- 3. We all need help from others who periodically shed light on our blind spots.  
Prov 16:2 *Self-deception* is the worst kind.

The problem is not criticism--but ***destructive*** criticism. Too often we don't know how to do it right so we avoid it all together.

## WE MUST BUILD UP & NOT TEAR DOWN!

### II. HOW TO GIVE CRITICISM *CONSTRUCTIVELY*

#### A. Choose your setting carefully -- timing is everything!

1. Do so after a meal and not when you're hungry.  
Ex. Esther gave two banquets *before* she approached the king.  
Afterwards, she got what she desired.
2. Criticize in **private** -- praise in **public**!
3. Consider the *feelings* of the other person.
  - a. How do you find out when it is okay?
  - b. *Ask!* "Honey, do you mind me sharing a constructive suggestion with you tonight?" S/he will either say "yes" or "no." If "no", usually curiosity will cause your spouse to ask about it later. Then s/he will be mentally prepared and less defensive. Doesn't that make sense?
4. Most people want to be helped and desire honesty in the relationship if they are just approached in the right way.
5. However, "*A man convinced of his will is of the same opinion still!*"

### DON'T SHARE UNTIL YOU ARE SURE THE OTHER PARTY IS *EMOTIONALLY* READY ...

#### B. Don't give an overdose!

1. One common failure is to pour it on! ("...And another thing, and another thing, etc.")
2. Hagar the Horrible gets permission and then says, "Better sit down and get comfortable."
3. Most don't realize how critical they have become...*LISTEN* to yourself. (Prov 17:9)

#### WARNING:

OVERDOSING KILLS THE MOTIVATION TO CHANGE!

#### SUGGESTION:

**ONLY ONE CRITICISM A WEEK!!!**

*(That ought to be enough --- that's 52 a year!)*

## GO ON A 24-HOUR CRITICISM FAST!

(See attached handout)

4. Challenge: Make it easy! **Ask for it** periodically.

### C. Couple criticism with compliments

1. Notice the ratio: 3 compliments to 1 criticism (John's example in Rev 2:1-4)
2. *"The bitter pill of criticism can be swallowed much easier if first sugar-coated with the medicine of sincere praise."*
3. Mary Poppins says: *"Just a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down!"*

### III. HOW TO RECEIVE CRITICISM CONSTRUCTIVELY

A. Recognize the hand of GOD! Rom 8:28 (GOD wants to use this for my good.)

B. Let your first words be *"Thank you!"* I Thess 5:18 *"In everything give thanks."*

Three reasons:

1. He said it to your face -- not behind your back.
2. If it is true, you need to change and now you can grow.
3. If it is false, it gives you opportunity to correct the misunderstanding.

C. **Always ask:**

#### *What can I learn from criticism?*

Not all are valid. But we can still learn something from all kinds of criticism.

1. Then **take action** if possible. You can't do what everyone says!  
Ex. My daughter wanted me to triple her allowance--not a good idea.
  2. Work with the reasonable requests for small things as much as possible.
- D. Never give the same criticism two weeks in a row. Give the other party at least a month before you bring up the same thing again.

#### IV. WHAT ABOUT THE THINGS THAT WON'T CHANGE?

A. "Love *covers* a multitude of sins." I Peter 4:8

LOVE ACCEPTS MANY IMPERFECTIONS!

Some things you will need to **accept**...

1. Otherwise, anger turns inward and becomes *bitterness and depression*.
2. Say the **Serenity Prayer!**

*"God grant me the serenity to **accept** the things I cannot change, the **courage** to change the things I can, and the **wisdom** to know the difference!"*

3. *"It is to His glory to pass over a transgression and seek love."* Prov 18:11

#### THE CONCLUSION:

**Don't mind criticism...**

**If it is not true, disregard it.**

**If it is unfair, keep from irritation.**

**If it is ignorant, smile.**

**If it is justified, learn from it!**

## TAKE THE "CRITICISM PLEDGE" & TRY A UNIQUE FAST

We live in a negative world! We are all bombarded with criticism constantly. **Why not allow your home to be a refuge from criticism?** Think of your mate as a haven, a peaceful retreat, the ever-quiet eye of the hurricane.

Research has found that the **significant decreasing of criticism and negative comments** from our family relationships is **even more important** than learning to express love positively. Small wonder Paul stresses we are to **dwelling on the positive!** "*Whatsoever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, dwell on these things*" Phil 4:8. One of the reasons this is so important is that it takes a great many positive strokes to make up for even one critical comment. So, **keep criticisms to a minimum and express them only if you feel it is really necessary.** "*Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath*" Jas 1:19.

Try promising your mate you will *never say a critical word* about him or her, make him\her *the brunt of jokes, nor in any way speak unkindly* of the other or *betray your relationship, and ask your partner to do the same!*

Think about it... What confidence it gives a woman to know that when other men are making fun of their wives or complaining about their weaknesses like their cooking, homemaking, lovemaking, shortcomings, and faults, **her name is safe.** And likewise, when women get together and begin to belittle their husbands, what security it gives a man to know that **his name will not be mentioned.** Oh, **it is not because there are no faults;** faults are self-evident. **It isn't because it wouldn't be justified.** Speaking no ill of each other is simply...

**BECAUSE OF YOUR LOYALTY TO ONE ANOTHER!**

**HOW DOES ONE OVERCOME BEING A CRITICAL PERSON?  
TAKE A 24-HOUR CRITICISM FAST!**

Start by stopping! **For a period of 24 hours, refrain from criticizing yourself, the government, the food, your boss and/or co-workers, your spouse, your surroundings --- come to a complete halt for twenty-four hours!!** Watch out for back-seat driving and comments on other drivers. Phone calls are dangerous. Especially watch out when you are hungry or under any kind of time pressure! **You cannot criticize anyone for any reason unless human life is in danger. Another exception would be if you hear or see another person who has agreed to take the fast but is criticizing without realizing it.** You may, in this case, point out kindly to him/her that s/he has done so and needs to start over, without being critical yourself for having pointed it out!

This is not as easy as it sounds. The majority of people do not succeed in their first attempt. Do not be discouraged. If you find yourself being critical, make a note of the time and **start your "fast" over again until you have gone for 24 hours** (including the time you are asleep) **without being critical at all!**

**BE CAREFUL NOT TO COMMIT WHAT I CALL, "Criticism of the Heart."** If a critical thought enters your mind and you get rid of the thought in a moment, then it does not count and you do not have to start your 24 hours over. If, on the other hand, **you let that critical thought stay in your mind and you develop it** into a full production with quadraphonic sound and vista vision, they you must start over again.

Don't be too hard on yourself if you don't succeed in this assignment right away. This is a difficult assignment!

### **WHY SHOULD YOU TRY?**

These are the positive objectives that I hope you will experience while doing this:

1. It will increase **your awareness** of the critical nature of our **society**.
2. It will help you to **become aware** of your **own compulsion to criticize**.
3. It will enable you to experience the **power of self-mastery**.

The answer to the question *"Why should I try to stop criticizing?"* is simply...*"So that you can lay a foundation for love and acceptance in your home instead of rejection."*

Take the pledge of **verbal loyalty to the relationship** to demonstrate your commitment to it! As a token of your willingness, stop criticizing. **Commitment and willingness are two keys to loving, lasting, emotionally-close marriages.**

I challenge newlyweds and couples who desire to enrich their marriages and to experience emotional 'remarriage' to **take the following pledge:**

*"I promise, as your mate, that I will never speak ill of you to friend, family, or stranger. I will not embarrass or belittle you in front of others, nor will I be critical of you in your absence. I will not discuss our personal problems with anyone without your permission. This is my pledge to you."*

**NOW LIVE IT !!!!!**