

How to Handle Criticism

1 Peter 2:19-24; 3:8-18

We live in a cynical and condemning world. In case you haven't noticed, living godly isn't getting any easier. While we cannot control criticism, we can respond biblically to it. And by walking in wisdom, we can do much to prevent it. In these moments, everything within you wants to rise up and defend yourself. You want to engage and win. The essential question is, how should I respond? What would God have us to do?

1. Go to God in _____ Hebrews 4:15-16

Take your burden to the Lord. In His presence you will gain strength, wisdom, and perspective. You will be reminded of your dependence upon Him.

2. Rest in the _____ of God.

Early in the process there must be a yielding of your will to God's. You must accept that He has allowed the attack, and you must rely on His timetable and His process to respond to it. God has not forgotten you. He is working in you, and He is preparing you for a greater work—even through the efforts of the critics. Remember, anything out of your control is in His plan. There is not a season of criticism in our walk that has not been immediately followed by a far greater season of growth and blessing—and the harder the trial the greater the blessing. I have often felt that the trials moved me forward in God's grace. Looking back, spiritual burdens and trials have always helped to go forward in our walk—every time.

3. Don't _____ or _____.

Mark Twain said, "Few slanderers can stand the wear of silence." In moments of attack, you don't want to react. He who throws mud always loses ground. Hold your tongue, hold your pen, hold your internet postings; grab hold of your words and submit them to the approval of the Holy Spirit. All godly believers get criticized. It's their response to criticism that sets them apart. John Adams wrote to a friend in Massachusetts after he had been hurt by a rival, "When a man is hurt he loves to talk of his wounds." This might mean you need a wise listening ear. It also means you could say the wrong thing in a moment of reaction! Some battles are not worth fighting. An old Chinese proverb states, "A bulldog could whip a skunk at any time, but it's not worth the fight." Hurting people hurt people. When you are hurting, don't react; respond. Prayerfully seek God's direction, obtain godly counsel, and follow a very predetermined course of action that pleases the Lord.

4. Grow in _____. 2 Cor. 9:8, 2 Peter 3:18

Allow God to use this time to call you more deeply to prayer and Bible study. Soften your heart and grow. If you don't make this conscious decision, your heart will likely harden and your spirit will become calloused toward people. Keep your heart soft and your spirit right during these times of difficult growth. In moments of pain and discouragement you start to feel like the whole world is against you. Isn't it amazing how Satan can do this? You might have a whole church family praying for you and loving you, but two critics can rob your joy.

5. Don't _____.

Let the trial strengthen your resolve. Often trials are the greatest indicator that we are on the right path, doing the right things. Everything that is moving forward encounters resistance—so thank God you are apparently moving forward. If you quit, your critics win, and much is lost for the cause of Christ. Don't let petty people determine your destiny. *God planned even your enemies*, and they are serving His purposes in your life. The critic may be a friend seeking to help you. He may have the insight to see one of your blind spots. Remember, a smooth sea never made a skillful sailor. Suffering truly qualifies and equips you.

