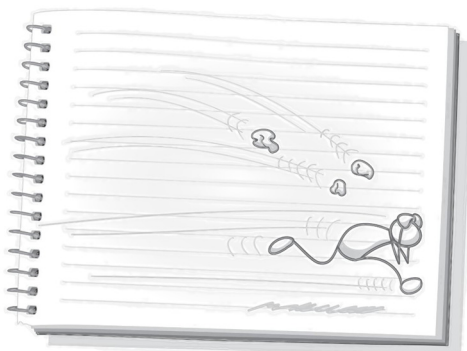


Should Christians Criticize Anyone?

Hebrews 10:24: (NASB) *And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.*



Criticism: we do not like it. For the vast majority of us, receiving it invokes feelings of angst, anger and resentment. Being criticized usually ends in a sense of being defeated and often leads us to resentment and a desire to lash out at whomever has been critical so we can give them a taste of their own medicine. These are bad results no matter how we view them. Have you ever noticed how much more free-flowing being critical is than grace and kindness? With all of this being said, it may come across as somewhat shocking how important criticism is in Christianity. It turns out that we all need to be shown our faults, weaknesses and inconsistencies in order to be better followers of Jesus. The key is in why the critical observations are made and how they are delivered. Once we understand these two things, we can then be open to the masterful art of positive criticism.

Joining us on this podcast is Jakim Bialek, our CQ Executive Producer.

Jakim: I am the founder of Orange Hill Media, the company I started in 2010. Around that time, I met Rick and Jonathan who were one of our first ten clients. I provide monthly critiques on the program and give production help and general branding consultation.



Merriam Webster:

Criticize: verb

- 1) to consider the merits and demerits of and judge accordingly: evaluate
- 2) to find fault with and point out the faults of

For the purposes of this podcast, we will focus on appropriate criticism between adults.

Why do we need to be criticized or evaluated?

Because we are sinful, and in that state we are trying to rise to higher levels of spiritual maturity:

Psalms 19:12-14: (NASB) ¹²Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. ¹³Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not rule over me; then I will be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression. ¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

Appropriate evaluation will bring us to our desired growth because it helps us:

- ✓ See what we are blind to seeing - verse 12
- ✓ Embrace our circumstance as a starting point; realize we are in a vulnerable position and need help - verse 13 (first half)
- ✓ Recognize the path to growth - verse 13 (second half)
- ✓ Walk upon the path higher, godly principles - verse 14

There are two key questions related to criticism which are the foundation for our discussion.

Two key questions:



1. WHY IS THE CRITICISM BEING MADE?

2. HOW IS IT DELIVERED?

Why? Paul is criticizing adult Christians for being childish when they should be far beyond such behavior:

1 Corinthians 3:1-6: (NASB) ¹And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³for you are still fleshly.

Paul is telling them they need to start growing up and move forward.

How? Paul delivers the criticism with logic and facts built upon scripturally sound reasoning:

For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴For when one says, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are you not mere men? ⁵What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

They were idolizing Paul and Apollos instead of benefiting from their Christian example. Apostle Paul was appropriately criticizing them for this.

Principles of Positive Criticism: Appropriate criticism is always based on facts and is always for the purpose of helping the criticized individual grow.

If criticism is always for the benefit of someone, is it ever appropriate to be harsh in its delivery?

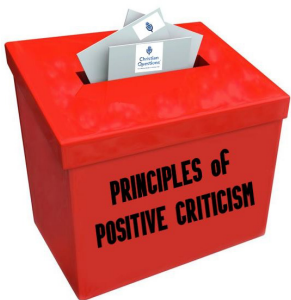
This is tricky. Harshness in an evaluation of another can be lifesaving, but the occasion for that is rare. It is far too easy to think that we ought to press hard upon someone for their own good. Emotion often takes over at these times, and we end up hurting them and feeding our own pride.

Criticism is a popular activity. We assume the right and authority to be critical of others without asking questions and having the right motivation. We text, post on Instagram, etc., and we criticize. Look at your social media life and see how much it happens.

Bill Belechick is the head coach of the New England Patriots and is a good criticizer.

 **Bill Belechick and the Importance of Constructive Criticism, YouTube**

- *I don't know how you can improve unless you can accept constructive criticism. I don't know how you can get any better.*

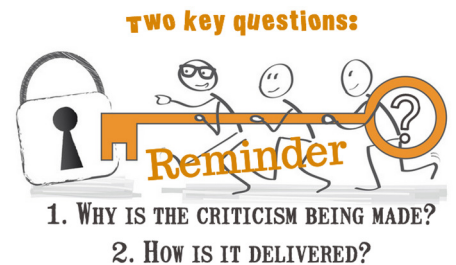




- *“That’s about the eighth time we’ve run that play! We gotta get that one. It’s I Near! Come on, it’s I Near! Think about it. That’s where a double team’s coming.”*
- *That’s what a football team has to do; it has to accept constructive criticism, recognize what they didn’t do well, or where its weaknesses are, and then improve on them to get better.*
- *“Get your pads down now and punch it through there. You with me? I don’t want to see that guy come up there and light you up and throw you on your back, alright? Get your pads down and punch it through.”*
- *Look, I can’t put you in a game if you don’t know consistently what to do, alright? I just can’t do it. I mean, we’re going to sit in here, and tell them what they did wrong. We’re going to sit in here and tell them what we think was not sufficient. If that’s going to take the player to say, “Oh, he’s picking on me,” and just shut it down and build up a wall and not accept any coaching - how’s he going to get any better? I mean, it won’t happen.*

Belechick offers harsh, constructive criticism.

Let’s look at a scriptural example of appropriate harsh criticism: King David being called out by God’s prophet, Nathan. (Remember to think WHY and HOW.) If we are delivering criticism, we need to ask ourselves these two questions.



David sinned deeply against God. He lusted after, fornicated with (committed adultery) and impregnated another man’s wife. He tried to hide his sin, and then had the husband abandoned on the battlefield to die. These are gross, immoral sins. Enter the prophet Nathan.

Five steps to harsh criticism appropriately delivered:



Get their attention first.

Nathan tells David a story and places its context within David’s kingdom and in need of the king’s judgment. David hears the story and with great emotion and righteous indignation, proclaims judgment upon the heartless and greedy man in the story and demands four-fold restitution.

Nathan got David’s attention and opened his eyes.



2 Samuel 12:7-12: (NASB) ⁷Nathan then said to David, You are the man!...

You are the man! Nathan got to the point.



Selflessly frame the fault.

...Thus says the LORD God of Israel, It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸I also gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these!

Nathan was delivering God's message. He proclaimed David was the sinful man which was harsh criticism. Nathan revealed the fault after he got David's attention, and then he framed it in a way that David could see the blessings of God.

Step Four:
Selflessly and plainly
state the sin.



⁹Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon.

He is reminding David that he offended God and *despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight* after He had so richly blessed him. It is not Nathan's criticism - it is the criticism of God coming through Nathan to David.

What a great example to us when we deliver criticism. It should never be *our* criticism; it should be *godly principles* coming through us.



¹⁰Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. ¹¹Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. ¹²Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.



Hard experiences were coming to David. Nathan framed the consequences for David honestly and plainly from God. The criticism was necessary and lifesaving.

Most of us are not appropriate with harshness.

Harshness, appropriately applied, can work:

2 Samuel 12:13-15: (NASB) *¹³Then David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said to David, The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die. ¹⁵So Nathan went to his house. Then the LORD struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was very sick.*

David says *I have sinned against the LORD*. He does not make excuses and try to justify himself. He is willing to accept the consequences. The criticism saved him. Properly applied criticism is wonderful.

Jesus quoting Isaiah about God's compassion:

Matthew 12:20: (NASB) *A battered reed he will not break off, and a smoldering wick he will not put out, until he leads justice to victory.*

Sometimes our actions bring us to a broken state of life, and we may need constructive criticism to bring us out of it. If the criticism is done in godliness it will not break us.

Principles of Positive Criticism: Harsh criticism has its place but should be rare. Its objective is ALWAYS to lift another out of the mire, and its delivery should be selfless.

The objective of harsh criticism should always have the objective of encouragement and building up one another.

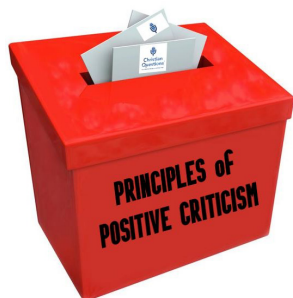
**What if we receive harsh, unjust and public criticism?
Is it ever appropriate to be critical in return?**

Again, we get into a difficult and grey area of life. Remember the principles of appropriate criticism - it is always for the purpose of lifting someone up and should always be delivered selflessly. This becomes an even greater challenge if we are confronted in a public and emotional environment.

 **A place for complaining, Constructive vs. Destructive Criticism, Pastor Greg Laurie**

- *They complain, the people that are being hurt complain. And by the way, there's a place for complaining. There's a place for criticism. Sometimes you might see something that isn't right, and you think it should change so you need to bring that to the attention of those who are in leadership. There's a difference between constructive criticism and destructive criticism. Constructive criticism sees a problem and wants to help. Destructive criticism sees a problem, amplifies it and wants to hurt. One wants to help you and build you up, the other wants to destroy you and tear you down. So, if you have an issue with someone don't talk about them, talk to them.*

This is powerful - “If you have an issue with someone don't talk *about* them, talk *to* them.” That is the best way to build someone up. Also, when we talk to them, it should be with a question rather than a criticism. We will develop this further later in the podcast.





Let's go to a scriptural example of destructive, public criticism. The example of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, is appropriate. (Think WHY and HOW.)



In the last segment we saw the WHY of the criticism was from Nathan because God told him to. The HOW was to get David to repent and it worked. The WHO and the HOW here are completely different.

Public places and debates are breeding grounds for unjust, jealous and emotional responses.

Stephen was a Christian being outspoken about Christianity:

Acts 6:8-14: (NASB) ⁸And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹But some men from... the Synagogue... rose up and argued with Stephen. ¹⁰But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

Public debates were common in that day - *but they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.* They felt threatened and intimidated, because he was eloquently explaining the word of God in a way they could not respond to it. It became emotional. Simple logic does not rile people up but emotion does, especially negative emotion.

Being bested in a public environment easily provokes dishonest criticism and feeds mob mentality:

¹¹Then they secretly induced men to say, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. ¹²And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council. ¹³They put forward false witnesses who said, This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; ¹⁴for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us.

They could not win the argument. They secretly induced individuals to lie and say half-truths. Some of the half-truths were the same things said about Jesus.

Criticized unjustly, Stephen responds to the public accusations against himself and Christianity by first being respectful:

Acts 7:1-4: (NASB) ¹The high priest said, Are these things so? ²And he said, Hear me, brethren and fathers!

We should respond as Stephen did - with patience, respect and honor.

Next, Stephen begins to tell the story of their common history. He finds common ground and builds from there:

The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³and said to him, Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you. ⁴Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.

Stephen recounts a detailed history that all can agree with and appreciate. He got their attention. He is not avoiding the lies and criticism; he is building up to his response which will be entirely based in scriptural truth.



The lie told was about the temple - Stephen now addresses it in its proper scriptural context:

Acts 7:47-53: (NASB) ⁴⁷But it was Solomon who built a house for Him. ⁴⁸However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says: ⁴⁹Heaven is my throne, and earth is the footstool of my feet; what kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord, or what place is there for My repose? ⁵⁰Was it not My hand which made all these things?

Stephen gave them scriptural answers and now he tells them that they had betrayed their own Messiah:

⁵¹You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. ⁵²Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; ⁵³you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.

Stephen was right to the point with the criticism. He answers their criticism scripturally and tells them the temple was a symbol and not a place where God actually lives. He tells them they are not being godly.

Stephen was put to death for this, yet he was faithful and victorious in witnessing to God’s truth. What an example! Stephen was selfless in his response.

Principles of Positive Criticism: Response to unjust public criticism must remain selflessly grounded in scriptural truth, even if the conclusions reveal sin and cost you dearly.

What do we do to get our minds set to be able to maturely handle harsh and unloving criticism?

There is a lot of work required here because we are not naturally wired to have hurtful things just bounce off of us. The good news is, there are very significant steps we can take to scripturally shield ourselves from such heartless attacks. As usual, to get this to work requires effort and discipline.

How do we frame our minds to be able to handle harsh and unloving criticism? (Think **WHY** and **HOW**.)

Between stimulus and response there is a space... in that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. – Viktor Frankl, Man’s Search for Meaning, Auschwitz Survivor

two key questions:

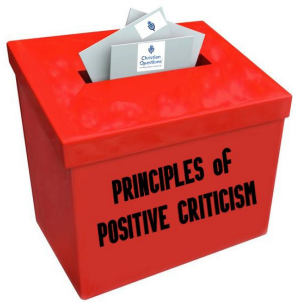


1. WHY IS THE CRITICISM BEING MADE?
2. HOW IS IT DELIVERED?

Four years ago, my sister, Joy, sent me this quote from Mr. Frankl and it literally changed much of my life. It helped me to understand that most of us react when we should just pause so we can respond.

Jakim has been with Christian Questions for over ten years. His job is to criticize us. He is a professional criticizer. How do you criticize to achieve the response you are looking for?

Jakim: At my company, Orange Hill Media, we do some video and TV production, but our bread and butter is assisting in podcast and radio show





production. When our team starts an evaluation period, we typically take a lead in listening to a show or podcast, providing many times a minimum of five pages of feedback. And I do not hold back.

I basically take the approach of what the audience would like or not like and what we have seen audiences respond to positively with our 20 years of experience. I am straight forward with making proactive and productive suggestions.

We learn and grow from the criticism so we can have a better impact and get our information across to our audience.

Jakim, what if you are careful and provide alternative suggestions and solutions - what if you get the sense that the criticism was taken personally, and it was not meant that way? How do you respond to that?

Often, I will do a face-to-face meeting or a phone call, because sometimes my feedback points are emails or a collaboration document, and I do a one-on-one conversation, even if the feedback is positive. Sometimes I give 90 percent positive and 10 percent negative feedback and when someone only focuses on the negative, I say, "Did you read or listen to what I said that nine out of 10 times you are doing it right?" Often people cannot get past the negative. Usually I just need to keep building them up with all the positives I see now and what we are working toward in the future.

You are saying you will follow up if you see it was not received appropriately, because your objective is to build them up and make them better.

I am not going to force someone. If someone cannot get past it, a lot of times I have verbal terms of conditions, and if I feel they do not want to follow through, then we disband, which is rare. You two are a shining light of how this is supposed to go.

We want to get better.

You are far beyond where you were ten years ago.

This was a practical example of someone who is in the profession of building others up by telling them what is wrong in an appropriate fashion.



Several managing criticism points:

First, give the godliness in you the space and ability to be heard:

Psalms 62:5-8: (NASB) ⁵My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him. ⁶He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be shaken. ⁷On God my salvation and my glory rest; the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God. ⁸Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah.

Look for God's will first and foremost.

If we wait for our heavenly stronghold to take hold, we can have the peace that comes with trust. Too often we respond based on our reaction. We do not give time to let godliness affect and change what we are responding to.



Second, consider the source. Imperfect earthly minds tend towards emotional, destructive criticism:

Colossians 3:22-25: (NASB) ²²Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

In such cases see the criticism for what it is and set your mind above it, for YOU ARE GOD'S:

²³Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. ²⁵For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

By considering and accepting the source of any criticism that comes our way, we can leave its judgment in the hands of God who knows and sees all.

Third, do a personal head and heart check to see where our thoughts and emotions are coming from:

2 Timothy 2:22-26: (NASB) ²²Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. ²³But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. ²⁴The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, (does this experience have an open door for selfless input? Just because we do not like something does not give us the right to criticize.) ²⁵with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition (the correction is so that God can touch their heart), if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

Amazing things can happen when we do not return criticism for criticism.



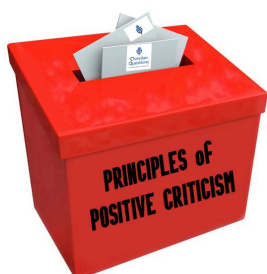
Recently, my wife and I have been focusing on the lesson of ignorant speculations. If we create speculations in our minds about someone, they are not based in truth. We need to stop making up stories in our mind that take away from purity and righteousness. On the other hand, when someone is coming after you in that way, without any truths, and they want to keep hitting you with speculations that are not founded in truth, it is debilitating and hurts. In our case with someone close to us, we find we can't even respond back because it will not be heard.

We mentioned earlier when we respond back to someone, we need to get the person's attention. What you are saying for this situation is there is no way that can happen. Sometimes the best way to manage it is to be quiet and godly. We may have to take it as a learning experience and move forward.

Fourth, walk in Jesus' footsteps - seek to measure up to the highest standard as best as you can:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7: (NASB) ⁴Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, ⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Principles of Positive Criticism: Successful criticism management can only be achieved when we handle our emotions through spirituality, context, self-awareness and the love Jesus showed us.





**Now that we know how to accept criticism,
what steps are necessary to appropriately give it?**

Jesus handily answered this question with the golden rule - *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.* Of course, applying this clear cut guideline is always easier said than done, but the biggest point to remember is that you want to be criticized only in a way that will help you grow. If this is the way you want to be criticized, then only criticize someone else in a way that will help them to grow. We need to put ourselves in the place of the recipient.

Appropriate criticism.
(Think WHY and HOW.)

Is it emotional? Is it personal? Is there anything in it about making the person better? Only be critical when you can truly see where someone is coming from. Know why and where they stand.

Two key questions:




1. WHY IS THE CRITICISM BEING MADE?
2. HOW IS IT DELIVERED?

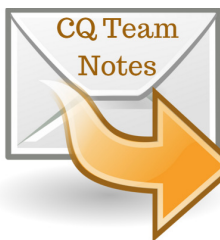
Romans 14:1-2,4: (NASB) ¹Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. ²One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only... ⁴Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

If we cannot see the WHY of someone's perspective, stop and find out what it is. How do we do that? We listen.



 **What did not go well, There is a Difference Between Honest Criticism and Negativity, Positive Coaching Alliance**

- *At some point we're going to transition to what do we gotta work on and how we say it. And then, you know, there'll be another list that'll form. So, sport is study. You can look at things in detail, and you can be honest. It doesn't have to be everything's okay and everything's super positive, and there's no problems. We can look at things in detail, but it doesn't have to be personal. It can be us that we're talking about in the collective, and sometimes even individuals say this is something I need to do better, and I think that's good. I mean it's honest, it's what happens if you care about something. I don't care whether it's the violin or whether it's a sport. I mean, you're going to invest yourself in improvement, and we just want to value improvement.*



Criticism is to value improvement.

If you want to criticize, start with yourself.

Trish: If I am to stand for truth, then should I use my hammer?

No, that is not God's way for us to deal with one another.



Only be critical when you have examined your own thoughts, feelings and motivations first:

Matthew 7:3-5: (NASB) ³Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, Let me take the speck out of your eye, and behold, the log is in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.



We need to be careful to not say, "I am standing for truth and here is the hammer."

God will judge us with the same harshness in which we judge others. Generally, a hammer's purpose is to smash something. We, as Christians, should not be wielding hammers against one another.



Listen first, pause second, think third and answer last:

Proverbs 18:12-13: (NASB) ¹²Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, but humility goes before honor. ¹³He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.

When we criticize with such harshness, we are giving an answer without listening. If we listen, perhaps it can become a conversation.

Only criticize based upon the clear word of God:

2 Timothy 3:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

All those things are constructive. We reprove someone not to make them feel bad but to help change their direction.

Examine our own thoughts first. Listen, pause, think and then answer. Only use the principles of the word of God.

Four practical theme text steps to take when emotions are high...before criticizing:

First, in your heart and mind, enter that holy place that you and I have access to by grace alone:

Hebrews 10:19-25: (NASB) ¹⁹Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which he inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

Second, cling to the cleansing and the new life given, leaving the old and broken flesh behind:

²²let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

Third, look for ways to build up the brotherhood - this includes appropriate critique:

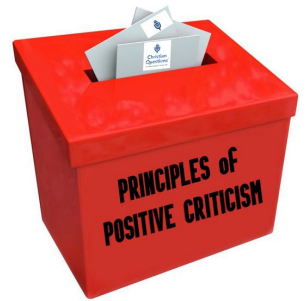
²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

Fourth, stay together:

²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.



Principles of Positive Criticism: Appropriate criticism is a powerful, godly tool of growth. Master giving it and build others up. Master receiving it and become a sound and mature Christian.



Criticism is part of daily life. Are we going to engage with everyone else and in the same way as everyone else in this popular daily activity? Or are we as Christians going to only criticize selflessly for the good of others because we love them so much? Are we going to criticize only to give others the ability to see God's grace more fully and clearly in their daily lives? Criticism is a wonderful tool - use it in a godly way.

*So, should Christians criticize anyone?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on May 6, 2019:
Ep. #1072: Does The Bible Contradict Itself? (Part 1)

Bonus Material!

Being negative only makes a difficult journey more difficult. You may be given a cactus, but you don't have to sit on it. — Joyce Meyer

There are many other examples of criticism in the Bible. Aside from Jesus calling out the Pharisees several times, we thought we would list some of the other critical events. Each is necessary. Some are harsh. All are done with the will of God behind them.

Receiving criticism from our Lord:

Revelation 3:14-19: (NASB) ¹⁴To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: ¹⁵I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷Because you say, I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing, and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, ¹⁸I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. ¹⁹Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.



Criticizing those whom we love and want to help:

Galatians 3:1-5: (NASB) ¹You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? ²This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

The hard and necessary criticism of Samuel to Saul - notice the selflessness, the questioning, the specificity, and the God-driven conclusion of Samuel:

1 Samuel 15:12-23: (NASB) ¹²Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul; and it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, then turned and proceeded on down to Gilgal. ¹³Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD. ¹⁴But Samuel said, What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? ¹⁵Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed. ¹⁶Then Samuel said to Saul, Wait, and let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night. And he said to him, Speak! ¹⁷Samuel said, Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the LORD anointed you king over Israel, ¹⁸and the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are exterminated. ¹⁹Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD? ²⁰Then Saul said to Samuel, I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. ²¹But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal. ²²Samuel said, Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. ²³For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.

The hard and necessary criticism of Peter by Paul - this event is personal, for Peter’s lapse in judgment set others plainly off track, and Paul needed to publicly correct that which was publicly mishandled:

Galatians 2:11-14: (NASB) ¹¹But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. ¹³The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?

The hard and necessary criticism of Simon the Sorcerer by Peter - here again there is no mincing of words for this man was very much in the wrong with his desires regarding the sacred spirit of God:

Acts 8:9-24: (ASV) ⁹But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who before time in the city used sorcery, and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: ¹⁰to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great. ¹¹And they gave heed to him, because that of long time he had amazed them with his sorceries. ¹²But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³And Simon also himself believed: and being baptized, he continued with Philip; and beholding signs and great miracles wrought, he was amazed. ¹⁴Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: ¹⁵who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: ¹⁶for as



yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, ¹⁹saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. ²⁰But Peter said unto him, Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. ²¹Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God. ²²Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee. ²³For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. ²⁴And Simon answered and said, Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me.

